<u>Proposing an Islamic Virtue Ethics Beyond the Situationist Debates</u>

Over the span of any day, our senses are bombarded in a way that can subtly shift our moods. Social psychologists argue that unbeknownst to us these changes in mood can influence our moral activity. Baron (1997) shows compellingly that smelling freshly baked cookies or cinnamon buns significantly increases female shoppers helping a stranger when compared to female shoppers who were in a scent neutral area. While there has been a replication crisis in this field of psychology, the effect of pleasant fragrances has been shown repeatedly as something that can affect people's helping behaviour[1]. Beyond the sense of smell, Christian Miller shows moods such as embarrassment can get more people to help people do a small task for others (2013, 62). Shifts in the environment considered not morally relevant can influence people to help more such as pleasant weather, being on a winning team, imagining oneself taking a vacation in Hawaii. Disagreeable environments can also significantly reduce people's willingness to help others whether by increasing the noise level, varying the temperature, watching unpleasant slides or even lowering the light quality (Miller 2009, 150).

How do these external factors have this kind of affect on our behaviour? Miller (2013, 67-70) offers two main types of explanations, the mood maintenance hypothesis and the concomitance hypothesis. The former sees mood as a direct cause of helping behaviour because the person put in a good mood wants to maintain it and helping others is an opportunity to prolong their good mood. But it's also been shown that mood can enhance other cognitive processes. In the concomitance theory, the elevation of pro-social behaviour isn't directly caused

---

[1] Examples of the vast literature just on pleasant smells and prosocial behaviour include Baron and Thomley (1994), Gueguen (2001), Linenquist et al. (2010), Gueguen (2012), and Sellaro et al. (2015).

by mood, but is a by-product of the changes in cognition brought on by different moods. Mark Alfano argues that there is empirical research that mood can have a significant effect on how much we attend to the world around us. And so good moods dilate focus and enables a person to notice opportunities to help that someone in a bad mood wouldn't (Alfano 2013, 47). On the other hand, Matthew C. Taylor reports that empirical research shows that people with positive moods report higher levels of belief that they will succeed in their goals. This is called "self-efficacy" and since "this plays a role in whether subjects attempt to perform some task or behavior, and this factor can be changed by mood effects, we would expect an influence of moods on behavior" (Taylor 2021, 56).

With its emphasis on moral education, developing and improving moral character, virtue ethics has always prided itself as a richer account of moral motivation that fits closer with real moral experience than its competitors. We explain what others do and what we do by referencing their character traits. John Doris (2002), the leading advocate for "situationism", a rival to virtue ethics, leverages social psychology research to contest the empirical adequacy of the moral psychological foundations of virtue ethics. As Miguel Alzola (2012) explains, "Doris proposes to see the situationist argument as abductive: the variousness of human behavior is best explained by reference to the hypothesis that virtues are rarely instantiated in human beings (633, 2005)". In what Miller calls the realism challenge, situationism casts doubt on the ability of virtue ethics to give an "account of how we can start with most people whose character is deficient in these ways, and outline steps to best help them gradually transform into virtuous people who, for instance, reliably help when needed for the right reasons and independently of what mood or state of guilt they happen to be in (Miller 2014, 210)".

The central worry of this article is one not widely discussed in the literature. Seth Robertson identifies it as the "indirect situationist critique". Rather than make the broad and overly controversial claim that we do not have virtues at all, the situationist challenges whether the programme of moral education, developing and improving moral character that virtue ethics prides itself on is the best strategy at all (Robertson 2018, 3). Instead they claim that situationism, with its greater focus on morally trivial situational influences such as the effect of mood on behaviour and that a more effective strategy would be to instead focus on how to manipulate situations.

In this article I concentrate specifically on situationist experiments related to mood.[2] While those defending virtue ethics often bring up their own arsenal of social psychological experiments (e.g., Miller 2009, 2013; Snow 2009, de Bruin et al. 2023), in this article, I examine two methodological sources not found in this literature. First, I argue for ethnography as an empirical method through which to study virtue. I draw on ethnography of the Islamic women's *dawa* movement to show how a contemporary virtue movement's practices can answer the indirect situationist challenge. As an Islamic group, *dawa* practitioners likewise fill a gap as a less-explored virtue tradition, and they employ a specific moral technology (the veil) that is also

---

[2] Virtue ethicists mostly concentrate on other situationist experiments, and responses to the mood experiments are thin. As Candace Upton (2017) argues, those defending virtue ethics against situationism often talk about regulating moral behavior but rarely take into account affective regulation and are therefore incomplete as accounts of virtue cultivation. Christian Miller (2013), in his "mixed traits" theory, argues that situationists are right—ordinary people have neither virtues nor vices but merely a mix of traits that can be at times consistent and other times not. Nancy Snow (2009) does not reject the results but argues for studies of more significant helping situations. She also asserts that the results are compatible with Aristotle's claim that truly virtuous people are rare. Rachana Kamtekar (2004) invokes the traditional Aristotelian aphorism that character just is a disposition to respond with appropriate feeling. So, rather than being irrelevant, your mood when you judge a situation and act is a central concern. This does not quite take the sting out of situationism but instead makes the point that this problem of one's passivity to moods has always been a central problem for virtue ethics. Finally, while Pauline Kleingeld is able to explain other situationist experiments using virtue ethics, she concedes that the mood experiments "show that human behavior is sometimes or perhaps even often – a deliberately vague term – influenced by factors outside the agent's conscious control (2015, 354)".

somewhat controversial—and perhaps misunderstood in the West. Secondly, because I concentrate on the worry that mood subtly influences our ethical actions, I look at another ignored empirical source, the work in the philosophy of mind on "affective scaffolding." One new direction Miller argues that empirically informed virtue ethics should head is to broaden discussion beyond Christian and dominant Aristotelian virtue ethics (2017, 464). My contribution attempts to bridge this gap,

I begin the first part by showing how situationism should make us question traditional understandings of virtues as intrinsic dispositions. I then introduce Islamic virtue ethics and the *dawa* movement. I also clarify why I chose that specific movement and why I use ethnography. In parts two and three I examine ethnography of the *dawa* movement to explore how they deal with worries about the influence of mood on their virtue. In part two I show how they train their habits in very traditional virtue ethics ways in order to be more resilient when faced with virtue-diminishing affective situations. In part three I show how the situation, rather than hindering practitioners, is recruited into helping these women achieve piety. I conclude, in part four, by showing the *dawa* movement's creative use of the Islamic veil as a way to help these women deal with the objection that one cannot avoid all bad situations.

Part 1—Redefining Character and Introducing the *Dawa* Movement

Section 1.1—Is Character an Intrinsic Disposition?

Most people who work on virtue ethics take for granted the idea that character just is an *inner* and intrinsic disposition.[3] Here I give Christian Miller's account of what Christine Swanton

---

[3] Miller gives a very long list of the main figures within virtue ethics who subscribe to this position (2013).

calls the "Orthodox Neo-Aristotelian" virtue ethics position on character[4] (2021). If character is an intrinsic disposition, then the person with compassion possesses a *property* that the person without compassion doesn't. This property plays a significant causal role in the first person being compassionate. The fact that it is intrinsic and a property creates expectations that the first person will be reliably compassionate (Miller 2013, 9). A classic example of an intrinsic disposition is fragility. Glass has the intrinsic property of being fragile, yet this fragility may never manifest if the right stimulus condition doesn't come about, such as if I push a vase off a dresser (Miller 2013, 8). Beyond the stimulus condition, background conditions also play a part. Even though my pushing the vase normally manifests fragility, a change of gravity would effectively mask this quality (Miller 2013, 8n13). The property of fragility does not go away even if it is never manifested. Crucially to the orthodox neo-Aristotelian view of character, the property of compassion is there *in* the person—while a person may never be compassionate in their life, metaphysically, they may have the property of compassion all along.

There isn't space in this article to fully argue why this concept of character should be amended. Instead, it is worth looking at Jennifer McKitrick's work showing that all dispositions aren't necessarily intrinsic. McKitrick loosely defines extrinsic dispositions as when objects that have perfect duplicates differ with respect to having certain dispositions, keeping the laws of nature fixed[5] (2018, 158). There are myriad non-intrinsic dispositions, especially those requiring social institutions and contexts. Think of the disposition of "bankruptability." Two people may

---

[4] Swanton uses the term *Orthodox Neo-Aristotelian* to contrast it with other, less academically dominant traditions such as Humean, Nietzschean, and Swanton's own "Target Centred" virtue ethics.

[5] McKitrick gives a more rigorous definition of extrinsic disposition as follows: "I define 'extrinsic disposition' as follows: If an object x has an extrinsic disposition, then (a) x typically exhibits a certain manifestation in certain circumstances, (b) usually, if x were in these circumstances, x would exhibit the manifestation, (c) the predicate "the disposition to exhibit the manifestation in the circumstances" is applicable to x and (d) merely changing x's environment could render these things false, or these things could be false of a perfect duplicate of x (2018, 159)".

be intrinsically alike but they differ because they happen to be in places with different markets and financial institutions. From this, a torrent of examples follow: "A coupon is redeemable. A new invention is marketable. A candidate is electable. A statement can be humorous, provocative, offensive, or inflammatory" (McKitrick 2018, 165). Important to my later argument that the virtues are affordances is an example of a disposition that is neither wholly intrinsic nor extrinsic but relies on a *relationship* between the two: visibility. Something is disposed to being seen if it is perceivable to some seer. The circumstances the disposition of an object being seen, though, depends not only on the capacity and skill of an appropriate type of perceiver, the materiality of the object, but also the background context, such as the lighting (McKitrick 2018, 161).

One of the main planks in my argument is that the situationist experiments and the indirect situationist critique should push virtue ethics to revise its metaphysical idea of character and virtue to better reflect this empirical evidence. But the motivation for rethinking the metaphysics of virtues does not just come from the "realist challenge" of adequacy to situationist empirical arguments, but a further challenge from Parisa Moosavi (2018) to truly naturalize virtue ethics.

Moosavi argues that certain kinds of orthodox neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics[6] calls itself naturalist in that it wants humans to be continuous with the rest of nature. Yet, as Moosavi points out, they seem to intentionally steer clear of contemporary biological science. Many critics of virtue ethics then use an appeal to evolutionary biology to argue against but also question the naturalistic credentials of the orthodox neo-Aristotelian view. In order to move forward in this

---

[6] Specifically, Philippa Foot and Rosalind Hursthouse and those that follow the path charted by them such as John Hacker-Wright and Michael Thompson.

debate, Moosavi argues that virtue ethics should own its empirical commitments and rethink its relationship with biology (2018, 305). Moosavi makes two important points on how virtue ethics should embrace evolutionary theory. Her first point clarifies that we don't need to consult empirical biology for an account of what human flourishing. Instead what we need grounding in biology is a concept of organism. Secondly, embracing evolutionary biology does not mean embracing the gene-centric modern synthesis. The concept of an organism as an irreducible entity finds no place in this theory. The consensus of the modern synthesis has been challenged from various fronts recently resulting in what Pigliucci and Muller (2013) call the "Extended Evolutionary Synthesis". This alternative approach to understanding evolution lends itself well to a virtue ethics argument for a holistic concept of organism (Moosavi 2018, 303).

The invitation to go beyond the modern synthesis helps us to see how in a more naturalistic theory of virtue ethics, the environment isn't a separate entity set over and against, and distinguishable from the organism. The modern synthesis, orthodox neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and situationism all assume the environment to be external, autonomous, unified and wholly separate the organism. Instead, as Denis Walsh argues, this idea of the environment is an abstraction. Like classical mechanics, it has explanatory value in models but we should be circumspect in making any metaphysical conclusions from it (Walsh 2021, 10). Rather the relation between an organism and the conditions it encounters is dynamic and interpenetrating, partially constituted by the organism's own activities (Walsh 2021, 6).

Focusing on humans, Joseph Rouse, a proponent of a practice-based philosophy of natureculture, emphasizes that people are holistic organisms as well. Our bodily capacities, practical orientations, interests and lives codeveloped with and are now constitutively entangled with our environments (Rouse 2023, 20). While virtue ethics frequently depends on practice

theory, Rouse points out a key issue: this approach often mistakenly treats practices as purely 'social', neglecting our animality (2023, 61). Our practices incorporate material settings and are equipmentally mediated. Human environment is not just material but intimately involves other people and for virtue ethics, other people are especially salient components of our developmental and pedagogical environments.

Importantly for my argument that virtue is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic but a relation between the two is that organisms never just experience bare, unarticulated environment. Instead, these experiences vary based on body size, skill, capacity and, for human animals, their social practices. My positive account of character follows Mark Alfano's definition of virtues as *affordances*. Alfano argues that virtues are a triadic concept: a relation between the agent's capacity and skills, their form of life and, the material environment (2014, 73). Take for example, playing the piano. Pianos can only afford being played if materially there is a piano. Secondly, the piano can only be played if the person has the skill and capacity to know what to do with the keys in front of them. Crucially, thirdly, the person playing the piano would never have acquired those skills if humans weren't involved in a form of life where piano technique is passed down from generations by teachers. Importantly for this paper, like the example of vision that I gave earlier, virtues are neither intrinsic as the orthodox neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicist claims nor are we asymmetrically shaped by our environment as strong situationism claims. Instead, virtues are the *relation* between inside and outside. The piano is nothing without the skills while the skills do nothing without the piano. In contrast to the intrinsic definition of virtue, where dispositionally one could have the *property* of courage, in the affordance definition of virtue courage exists only when an opportunity in the world affords a person who has practiced and developed their courage *acts* in the appropriate, courageous way. Unlike intrinsic

dispositional accounts, courage doesn't preexist the act, but neither could there be a situation that just influences courage without there being a skill or capacity that was worked on by the individual.

The normative upshot of the indirect situationist challenge for John Doris is that instead of habituation, the person should strategize to put themselves in good-making situations. To this the virtue ethicist might retort that, for example, pleasant smells don't *uniformly* dispose one toward good behaviour. Rodgers and Warmke argue, for a person to follow Doris' advice involves skills to judge when to go into a situation. A person would need years of practice and experience to become a reliable situationist. Yet this looks like situationists need to support the virtue ethicist strategy of habituating character to be better at manipulating situations (2013, 19). To Kleingeld, it seems clear that in order to manage one's situation well, the situationist needs to rely on the ideal of the global, robust and stable dispositions that they attack virtue ethics for assuming. Therefore, the situationist solution itself faces a serious bootstrapping problem (Kleingeld 2015, 356). Rodgers and Warmke use this argument as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the situationist position, I see the right conclusion to draw from this being that we must rely on *both* positions. If we understand virtues as affordances correctly, to even access the moral technologies that situationism proposes a person needs the skills and capacities to do so. To get these skills and capacities means that one must train and work on the self in much the way that virtue ethics traditionally shows us. To better unpack my claim that an individual who wants to improve their character needs to combine *both* virtue ethics with situationism, we have to look at a series of psychology experiments not often associated with situationism.

Neil Levy looks again at the famous marshmallow experiments and recent follow-ups on self-control. These experiments involved children being presented with a reward, like a

marshmallow, and then being instructed that if they were able to abstain from eating the marshmallow for five minutes, they would be rewarded with two marshmallows. Those able to delay gratification were shown through longitudinal studies over twenty years to use this self-control toward greater life success than those who gave into temptation. Levy points out the fact from more recent experiments that those who did well at self-control, however, did not possess more *willpower* than the average person (2017, 200). Levy explains this by showing that those best at restraint used strategies to control the environment to stop themselves from eating the marshmallow. Many of the most successful delayers of gratification avoided the reward by covering their eyes, playing games, singing songs, or, in one case, successfully going to sleep (Levy 2017, 205). In follow-up experiments, many people with high self restraint would pick distraction-free environments so as to not be tempted (Levy 2017, 203). So, this is not a difference in willpower but a difference in *skill*. Importantly for my argument, those who were skilled at using the environment were shown, in situations where they were not allowed to manipulate the environment, to have *worse* than average self-restraint (Levy 2017, 203).

These arguments by Levy allow me to frame my assertion of the necessity for virtue development and situational management in the form of a dilemma. Here the first horn of the dilemma is that to manipulate and withstand the influence of moods, one needs training into a kind of expertise first. The second horn of the dilemma acknowledges the indirect situationist problem. As a novice, it seems almost impossible not to be influenced by situational moods since one does not have the training, skill or knowledge to manipulate or withstand the pressures of situations yet. But this means that the novice in virtue training also has a bootstrapping problem. This leads to my conclusion that in order to morally develop, a person needs both to train in traditional virtue ethics methods but also learn how to withstand or manipulate the situation. The

aim of the rest of this paper is to show how the women's dawa movement can both protect their novices from the influence of situations, but also to train them in withstanding and manipulating the situation in order to improve their virtue of piety.

Finally, before moving on to the ethnographically informed part of this article, I want to explain a different way of thinking about the situationist challenge. It can be illustrated through Edward Slingerland's high-bar metaphor of achieving reliable virtue (2015). The bar—a combination of a lack of habituation and the various distractions of the situation—is the obstacle encountered by novices in achieving virtue. How can people get over this bar? For *dawa* adherents, the training they undergo gives their character a boost to make it over the bar. Also, because they are aware of the influence of situation, they are able to *use or change* circumstances accordingly. This in turn lowers the bar. The combination of enhanced jumping and lowered bar means that individuals who want to achieve virtue can more easily clear this bar. There is one important disanalogy here: I argue that situations are not only obstacles to virtue, but they can be manipulated by the individual to make attaining virtue easier. This is to turn the bar of situationism into part of the pole that leverages the vaulter over the threshold of attaining virtue.

Section 1.2—A Brief Introduction to Islamic Virtue Ethics and the Women's *Dawa* Movement

Islam has always been concerned with a believer's body, habits, and mundane activities. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, a hadith scholar in the ninth century, recounts that someone said to the Prophet Muhammad's companion Salman, "Your Prophet has taught you everything, even how to take a shit!" Salman unironically replied, "Yes, he has! He has forbidden us to face in the direction of Mecca when defecating or urinating, to cleanse ourselves after defecation or

urination with the right hand … or to cleanse ourselves with a piece of dung or a bone" (Katz 2002, 1). Marion Katz argues, in her book about ritual purity in Islam, that Islamic *sharia* is a comprehensive system encompassing all aspects of life, including the most apparently trivial details of the believer's private conduct, which has "provoked the mirth of seventh century pagans and twentieth century Americans alike" (2002, 1). We should be careful not to think of *sharia* as positive law in the Western context. *Sharia* is not simply a set of detailed instructions that focus on action and "what to do"; its aim is more consonant with the virtue ethical goal of showing the believer "who to become."

The Islamic women's *dawa* movement is a contemporary movement organized around formal and informal teaching and practice to become more Islamically virtuous, concentrating especially on the virtue of piety. It began in the early 1980s in Egypt; famous ethnographies have been written about adherents by Leila Ahmed (1992) in the early 1990s and Saba Mahmood (2005) in the early 2000s. Since then, the movement has flourished in western Europe, drawing the attention of anthropologists. Beyond Ahmed and Mahmood's work on the *dawa* movement in Egypt, I use Naima Bouteldja's work in France (2011), Jeanette Jouili's work in France and Germany (2015), Petra Kuppinger's work in Germany (2015), and Anna Piela's work in the UK (2019). Within these groups, coaching of virtues and skills does not just run from teacher to novice; there is a "horizontal pedagogy" of women encountering new situations, learning from them, sharing with the group, and their strategies and tips being picked up by others in the group.

Section 1.3—Why Ethnography?

Most of the literature on situationism and virtue ethics relies on either ancient texts or contemporary work on psychology. It is thus worth answering why I integrate ethnography rather than just concentrating on the ancient Islamic *akhlaq* tradition. To address this, I bring up four reasons why social psychology needs supplementary ethnography. The first worry is that situationist experiments are a one-time performance rather than reiterative. Second, these experiments are artificial and, third, they are done not on people working toward virtue but random individuals. Finally, if social practices are such an indelible part of character development as well as reasons for action, ethnography is the only empirical methodology that can conceptually capture these forms of life.

One of the oldest criticisms of situationist experiments is that they give us very little predictive power since they are based upon single assessments of a subject's behaviours. Gopal Sreenivasan (2002) wonders if a person has an opportunity to steal something and doesn't once, does that person really possess the character of honesty? A clear correlation between character traits only emerges through repeated observations over a long period. But fifteen years after Sreenivasan's criticism, this problem continues to plague situationism, as both Upton (2016) and Miller (2017) have continued to call for more longitudinal studies. Ethnographic research is much more diachronically robust than cases or single experiments. This kind of research is often conducted over a period of months or years and can uncover how people make choices on a repeated basis and if and how they come to revise them over time. Ethnography not only tells us if a person has a certain character but it can track changes, both roadblocks to as well as development in character. Much of the work of Saba Mahmood and those that followed the *dawa* movement from Egypt to Western Europe do exactly this type of empirical work.

Secondly, Meija and Skorburg argue that situationist studies are conducted in laboratory settings with strangers and do not connect with real situations that people might face. They have little to do with real social environments. This is important because if situationist claims are true, there are any number of minor environmental factors that could influence a person's agency (2022, 16)—and so the concrete consequences are stochastic. When we consider the effects of workplace and social contexts on individual agency, it becomes clear that organizational settings play a significant role in altering unconscious habits and character traits. These changes are not random but are shaped in a foreseeable way by the ethical culture or ethical climate of the organization, a notion well-established in social psychology[7]

Third, as Matt Sticher points out, it is astonishing that virtue ethicists and situationists think it surprising that ethical competence is so low (2018, 145). Stable character and virtue are in fact achievements that take time and a lot of work rather than being inculcated into us as a "second nature" just by growing up in a society. As Richard Kim puts it, "evaluating the plausibility of virtue ethics by examining the behavior of ordinary agents is like evaluating the effectiveness of a regimen for learning the piano by examining the ability of people who haven't actually gone through the training (2016, 479)". Rather than experimenting on those who don't care about working on themselves, a mostly unexplored yet promising topic for empirical inquiry is to see the degree of reliability in the character traits of those who deliberately train themselves in virtue (Slingerland 2015, 150). With the *dawa* movement, we can show what an empirically defensible contemporary virtue ethic might look like. We might also gain insight into innovative new ways to handle environmental and social terrains hostile to virtue.

---

[7] There is a large literature on how work organizations can influence an employee's moral integrity and helping behaviour both positively and negatively through its ethical climate or ethical culture. See for example Trevino et al. (1998).

Finally, social practices are a central feature of character, both in that the way that people react to things only has meaning within a form of life and also that a person develops their character within a form of life. Social practices have a diachronic thickness, unlike the ahistorical action that psychology studies. Unlike other traditions of moral philosophy, action at its normative best is not *just* noncontextual moral deliberation. For orthodox neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, good action also flows from good habituation as well as from one's development within a familial and political community (Aristotle 1095b 4-6; 1179b 20-35)[8]. The empirical and conceptual tools available to psychology have no way to make this historical contribution to action legible. But ethnography can highlight the tacit social commitments that undergird practices and actions. A good ethnographer embeds herself for a time within the forms of life of her subjects and begins to understand why people do what they do, not just from a dispassionate external view but through discerning their internal practices. It takes time and habituation to live with people in the way they do, and this engagement should transform the ethnographer. Ethnography tells us not only what people value but also *why* they value it. This exercise often reveals a moral terrain that is more complex and nuanced than one we may have suspected from afar (Herzog and Zacka 2017).

Part 2—Habituating Character

---

[8] Both John McDowell (2009, 41) and Sarah Broadie (1991, 22) worry about the arbitrariness of Aristotle grounding moral development and ethical deliberation on a good upbringing.

In what follows, I concentrate on ethnography that showcases the *dawa* movement's training of their habits. These habits metaphorically aid them in "jumping" over the bar that situationism presents in their ability to be virtuous.

The pious women who wear the Islamic veil[9] understand the great difficulty of overcoming mood and desire. As a response, they band together into pedagogical *dawa* groups to train and teach each other skills and strategies for self-regulation. When asked why they have joined the *dawa* movement specifically, Mahmood's subjects responded that they felt adrift in the unconscious uptake of the habits of modern Cairo and heading in a spiritual direction that they did not like.[10] They talked of a "transformative force beyond their control that was corrosive of the sensibilities and habits" (Mahmood 2005, 44) of the person they envisioned themselves becoming.

Section 2.1—Habitually Training Affect through Prayer

The idea of training our affects clashes with many contemporary intuitions that one should not fake one's emotions—because to do so involves an inappropriate theatricality and

---

[9] In using the *dawa* women's movement to illustrate a contemporary Islamic virtue ethic, I am ignoring many of the political and moral controversies surrounding veiling. The ethnographies I use are from women in countries where not veiling is not illegal, such as France, Germany, Belgium, and Egypt. But it is worth acknowledging that there *are* countries that use state violence to coerce women to veil. Homa Hoodfar's 40 years of work on the veil, both in countries where it is compulsory and in countries with the veil is banned gives a better picture of the issues. On the current social movement rebelling against these laws in Iran but also the banning of the veil in Quebec, a good introduction is this interview with Hoodfar: https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/iranian-feminism-and-all-these-different-kinds-of-veils.

[10] Even when the veil is chosen freely, there has been debate about both the patriarchal coercion that goes into the practice as well as Qu'ranic and historical changes over time that have led to the connection of the veil with piety for Muslim women. For an overview and history of the *dawa* movement and the practice of the veil in Egypt, see Leila Ahmed's work (1993). For arguments by Islamic feminists against the practice of the veil, see the work of Fatema Mernissi (1991) and Marnia Lazreg (2009). For Islamic feminist arguments wary of condemning the veil, see Lila Abu-Lughod (2013) and Saba Mahmood (2005).

training and shaping one's emotions is a kind of self-deceit, blocking someone from authentic self-knowledge. Authentic emotions come from the inside and manifest themselves, unconstrained by norms. But in the Islamic virtue ethics paradigm, novices work on bringing about feelings until they become part of one's second nature. I turn now to one example of the *dawa* movement training their feelings.

For the *dawa* group studied by Mahmood, weeping when one's head touches the floor during prayer was seen as a sign of virtuosity (2005, 129). Some people so deeply felt the emotional significance of bowing in humility and submission to God that the action "naturally" triggered weeping. But for most, help was needed from other *dawa* adherents to train that feeling. The women in the *dawa* group often encouraged each other to imagine the razor-thin edge of the right path that hung over a pit of torment; others describe invoking the sublime by thinking of God's immense power compared to their own insignificance (Mahmood 2005, 130). But weeping is a strong, visceral reaction and sometimes trying to coax the emotion from within is not possible. As in orthodox neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, the amateur is encouraged to follow those with exemplary characters. In this case, weeping was the action of Abu Bakr, a companion of the prophet Muhammad and the first Caliph. "Many of the mosque participants believed that to emulate Abu Bakr's habit of weeping during prayers was not wrong precisely because it was through this mimetic reproduction that one eventually came to acquire the moral character of the exemplar" (Mahmood 2005, 148). For the amateur working on their piety, the feeling of crying every time one prays might not come from within and so weeping is sometimes outwardly simulated to bootstrap the affect. This practice of pretending to cry until one becomes excellent enough to spontaneously cry is not new, but simply a contemporary iteration in the long history of training the affects in Islamic virtue ethics.

Elizabeth Bucar argues that the *dawa* movement's practice of simulation goes as far back as the first Muslim virtue ethicist, Ibn Miskawayh. For him, "a 'good heart' does not necessarily need to precede physical actions as part of the cultivation of character. In this view, the idea that one might need to 'fake it until you make it' is not ethically insincere but, rather, a natural part of the process of character formation" (2015, 203). The specific affect one is supposed to cultivate during prayer is *huzn* or "sorrow." As far back as the tenth century, al-Makki advised, "verily the Qu'ran was sent down with *huzn* so when you recite it feign *huzn*," which is echoed in the fifteenth century by al-Suyuti's advice: "so when you recite [salat or Qu'ran] weep, and if you do not weep then feign weeping" (Nelson 2001, 91). The pious amateur sees their progress in training when they go from simulating weeping to it becoming more "natural," until their attunement to the affect is such that they can weep "spontaneously" (Mahmood 2005, 130). All of this affective training builds robust skills and capacities to arm these women against the influence of external inappropriate moods.

Section 2.2—Breaking and Creating New Habits through Ritual Spaces

In order to transform themselves, these Muslim women have to change their feelings and their habits. One obstacle to changing habits, claims James Bernard Murphy, is what he calls "habit interference." We come to any new event with all of our previous experiences and habits; this means we not only have to learn a new skill but erase the impression on us of our old way of being. "The best-studied and most terrifying example of habit interference concerns the controls of an airplane: what pilots learn on one kind of plane often interferes with their ability to learn new cockpit controls. This interference is a major cause of airplane crashes" (Murphy 2015, 8).

Michael Puett argues that the role of ritual spaces is to help break old habits. Ritual spaces are specifically places where we act out counterintuitive ways of thinking, acting, and responding. And it is precisely the tension between rituals and our lived reality that renders them effective (2015, 547).

Here I concentrate on the ethnography of Petra Kuppinger, a geographer and anthropologist, whose work on Muslim women who formed piety groups in Stuttgart, Germany, gives us insight to the habit-breaking power of ritual space. This power is illustrated by the story Kuppinger tells of Amna, the child of a Spanish-Pakistani family who had not been religious. Amna had only "reverted" back to Islam three years prior and was considered a novice who, with the help of the *dawa* group, her friends, and some older women, was internalizing a proper pious subjectivity. "[At the mosque] Amna… got up and said she would bring chairs from a classroom… One minute later she returned, all out of breath, without a chair and reported to her friends: 'Imagine, I ran into the classroom and there was a man in the room. So I quickly ran away without a chair.' The group decided that it must have either been one of the men doing renovation work, or somebody involved in the administration of the children's Islamic study classes. A little later another girl went back, and as the man had left, she retrieved some chairs" (Kuppinger 2015, 94).

Without understanding the role of ritual space, this story might seem paradoxical to the naïve observer. Living in Germany, Amna went to public school and encountered strange men all the time there and on public transportation—why was this situation different? The mosque is a place where to be alone in a room with an unrelated male is against the ethos of the space. We should not think of these women's lives as schizophrenic or hypocritical when they act one way in public and another in mosque. Instead, we need to see what work the mosque as ritual space

does for these women's character. As a novice, Amna needs the sheltering space that the mosque provides in order to serve as an experimental training space for her pious practice. Importantly, the mosque provides an affectively sheltered space for the novice to know they are safe from situational pressure and so can escape from the dilemma I framed at the start of this article and can, in the mosque, bootstrap themselves such that they can withstand as well as manipulate the situation.

For Puett, ritual spaces give us the latitude of the "as if." There we act "as if" the world really was ordered in a particular normative way (2008). Within the space, where everyone acts as if piety involves no interaction with men, there is a kind of transubstantiation of making the ritual into a reality for that place and time. But of course, this only lasts as long as we follow it in the right way. This is how we can explain Amna's distress, both in that this is how affectively she should feel in playing right along with the norms of the ritual space and also the worry that the normative spell might be broken.

Part 3—Using the Situation for Virtue

Section 3.1—An Introduction to Affective Scaffolding

After ethnography, the second methodological innovation I bring to bear on the situationism debate is a turn to cognitive science and the philosophy of mind—specifically, new work on the concept of "affective scaffolding." Here we move from the traditional virtue ethic strategy of training one's habits to the different ways that the *dawa* movement uses the situation to carve out a particular mood. Integral to this strategy is the understanding that affect can be

scaffolded externally, both onto the environment as well as onto other people.[11] I posit that being able to scaffold emotion into the environment can help a person change their moods and habits and therefore "lower the bar" that situational obstacles present to attaining virtue.

What we must first understand about the phenomenon of affective scaffolding is that it is pervasive, mundane, and connected to our social practices. It does not pertain to just one kind of material structure. As Coninx and Stephan argue, it can be biochemical (food or drugs), representational (pictures or rituals), technical (computers or smartphones), sociobiological (other people or pets) sociotechnical (social media), or socioinstitutional (conventions and norms) (2021, 44). We are often oblivious to a lot of our own affective scaffolding activities. And as situationist experiments show, already constructed affective scaffolding inconspicuously structures our experiences. This suggests scaffolding is pervasive and that the mind is always already entangled in and supported by a dense web of scaffoldings (Saarinen 2020). Importantly for my argument, affectivity is not just a matter of passively undergoing bodily and experiential changes as situationist arguments seem to imply. One can also *actively* modify one's environment for the sake of one's affective life. Agential affective scaffolding is quite mundane and we are constantly doing it. There are multiple examples of this: we listen to music to relive past emotions, indulge in comfort food, move furniture around for novelty, and wear certain clothing for its tactile properties or familiarity.

For instance, people often rely on music to feel more energetic and enthusiastic, to unwind and relax, create a romantic atmosphere, or rekindle past experiences (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1162). Not only is it mundane, but this kind of scaffolding insinuates itself very

---

[11] I use the term *scaffolding* to highlight the explanatory power of affective phenomena that exceed the brain and body but without wading into the controversies over whether mind or affect can be "extended" (Coninx and Stephan 2021, 43). For the difference between the extended mind and scaffolded mind, see Sterelny (2010).

deeply into our routines and habits. A good example is how difficult the prospect of a workout becomes when, if after arriving at the gym, I discover that the battery of my mp3 player has died and I no longer have a soundtrack to push me through a workout. We scaffold our affects interpersonally as well. The context and scaffolding can change quickly depending on who we interact with, as we move through different interpersonal contexts (e.g., speaking to the boss at work, eating lunch with colleagues, having a friendly chat with a stranger in the neighbourhood market) (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1170). Certain affective states may only come out when we are part of a group of a certain kind. Often if we are away from our childhood home for a long time, we experience certain familiar and comforting affects when we hang out with a group of old friends, even if the place is not where we all originally met. This scaffolding of memory associated with these groups also aligns with behaviours like slipping on an old familiar sweater or eating comfort food.

We use the sensory-scape around us all the time. In fact, each sense can generate certain affects: listening to music, eating comfort food, putting on a worn-out sweater for its tactile properties, and seeking out smells associated with certain memories. As described previously, such scaffolding can also be used to train the affects by creating ritual spaces in places that might not have previously held the correct affective stimulation for virtue.

Section 3.2—Affective Scaffolding and the Islamic Soundscape

In this section I present an interpersonal affective scaffold that arguably helps individuals retain their virtue: the "Islamic soundscape." The urban soundscape is a kind of aural background that we rarely notice but to which anthropologist Charles Hirschkind claims we can

attune ourselves to. The Islamic soundscape is not a centrally planned event meant to raise virtue, but instead the unintended product of many independent Cairenes putting on sermons and other religious programming to help them work throughout the day. As one walks through Cairo, one can hear sermons leaking out from standing taxis, open windows of passing cars, windows of houses where someone is doing the dishes, and wafting out the open and closing doors of corner stores. This is a much different soundscape than one would experience walking through a North American city. It is how many Muslims integrate Islamic virtue practices into every sphere of their lives.

What we must grasp, according to Hirschkind, is not the semantic content of the arguments made in the sermons. Instead, these cassette sermons "provide a sonorous environment where the nourishing, transformative power of ethical speech works to improve the conditions of one's 'heart,' fortifying the moral sensibilities that, in accord with Islamic ethical traditions, incline toward right actions … these moments of audition are understood to contribute, if in qualitatively distinct ways, to the honing of an ethically responsive sensorium: the requisite sensibilities that many of those engaging in cassette-sermon listening see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities" (Hirschkind 2006, 10). As Noah Salomon describes about his experience in the Sudan, "other urban sites as well, such as the bus, the store, and the street, become not distractions from ritual duties performed at the right time and in the right place, but new spaces where ritual can take place, so that one's day is suffused with remembrance of God and the Prophet" (2016, 167). But to take advantage of this affordance, she must be trained in the right way to listen to them—she must be attuned emotionally.

Let us contrast an untrained ear with a cultivated ear. Hirschkind met many Egyptians and foreigners who had not cultivated a pious ear, who would comment that "upon hearing the voice of a khatib coming from the loudspeaker of a neighborhood mosque or from a cassette recorder at a local store experienced a certain physical or emotional discomfort…. 'It's scary walking by a mosque on Friday when the preacher is raging away, filling the minds of those people with wild fears about the tortures of hell…. All of these bearded men crying and shouting 'Allah'—I'm always half-expecting them to jump up [out of the speaker] and come running after me" (Hirschkind 2006, 17–18). To the untrained ear this wasn't just noise—it was angry clamour that put them in a fearful affective mood, such as when one is accosted aggressively on the street.

But after many months listening along with his subjects of study, Hirschkind too came to be attuned to the sermons and "came to appreciate the unique musicality of sermon discourse, with its crescendos, andantes, and sotto voce passages, performed not only by the khatib but by the listener as well" (Hirschkind 2006, 13). He realized that this musicality was not an epiphenomenal, aesthetic gloss. The aesthetic is important to this pious training because these people are retraining themselves to *feel* differently. These sermons are not about bringing propositional arguments to sway someone toward a particular reading of the Qu'ran; instead they offer a way of transforming and attuning one's affect so that one can gain the appropriate feeling and cultivate a "sensitive heart" (Hirschkind 2006, 9), tuning one's body out of bad, unconscious habits.[12] If something as simple as the smell of cinnamon buns can change one's mood, then a pious aural sensorium can also surely push the attuned Muslim toward piety throughout their day.

---

[12] Huebner (2016) discusses the claim that changing the normative environment can target implicit biases.

Section 3.3—Scaffolding Affect in Others

Affective scaffolding is done not just in the material environment but also within one's community. Self-transformation into a pious virtuoso is never done alone. Situations do not asymmetrically only affect our behaviour; we influence situations just as much as they influence us. If something as small as finding a dime or smelling cinnamon can expedite helping behaviour, then surely our pleasant or unpleasant daily dealings with other people have an outsized effect on others' lives.

There is a famous *hadith*:[13] a good friend is like a perfume seller. If you hang around them long enough, even without trying, you will come out smelling good, the musk will hang around you. A bad friend is like a blacksmith. If you hang around them long enough, you might get your clothes singed or at the very least you will smell like smoke and burning from their bellows.[14] Here we see how important it is in Islam to surround yourself with good people. Friends and even strangers subtly polish us into virtue or abrade us into vice. We absorb the words and conduct of those around us without even realizing it (Stalnakar 2007).

As Sarkissian points out (2010) small positive moments of kindness to strangers take on an outsized influence and that means we might never punch out from the moral clock. Much differently from our traditional intuitions of moral responsibility, this view involves taking *co-responsibility* for contexts of people's actions. The realization that others affect our mood thrusts upon us the responsibility of reciprocity—of making sure situations facilitate others' virtuous

---

[13] Pedagogical stories told by the Prophet Muhammad.
[14] Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Hadith 314.

actions for the reason we hope that others would do the same for us. This could seem quite demanding and overly burdensome, isn't it enough to take responsibility for your own actions? In answering this, we first have to remember that the entire point of focusing on situations was not only to make moral development more manageable but possibly even easier. As Lisa Herzog argues, this might even get us to focus politically on moral issues that are often overlooked such as developing a moral division of labour that distributes moral burdens more fairly as a matter of justice. "In an ideal society, in which everyone did their fair share, morality might not have to be overly burdensome (Herzog 2018, 43)".

The story told by Mahmood, focusing on Abir's journey to piety, sheds light on how a virtuous person can influence others. This is evident in her relationship with her husband Jamal, who initially had a vicious character. There was great tension between them: Jamal refused to pray, drank alcohol, loved X-rated movies, berated her ambitions in the *dawa* group, and even threatened to take another wife and divorce her. Yet it was Abir's virtuosity, through support from her *dawa* group, that won out in the end. Abir met Jamal's tactics with strategic grace. She "killed him with kindness," led prayers in the house herself, and made sure to do her wifely duties before going out to do her *dawa* work so that he could not fault her. She also used her training in Islamic knowledge to critique Jamal's practice and embarrassed him by taking the moral high ground. As Mahmood relates, "all of [Abir's] strategies eventually had a cumulative effect on Jamal and, even though he never stopped pressuring Abir to abandon her studies at the *dawa* institute, the intensity with which he did so declined. He even started to pray more regularly, and to visit the mosque occasionally with her. More importantly for Abir, he stopped indulging his taste for alcohol and X-rated films at home" (Mahmood 2005, 178).

The effect of others' action on our behaviour has been shown empirically in what has been called the bystander effect. Here experimenters showed that people were reluctant to help in situations where there were other people close but who were also not helping (Darley and Latane 1968). And so the situationist bootstrapping problem for the novice who wants to develop their virtues extends beyond just the influence of the material environment. Importantly for my central argument, Taylor (2019) argues from social psychological evidence that expertise can mediate the influence of the bystander effect. While regular college students succumbed to the bystander effect, registered nurses consistently helped both in the presence and absence of bystanders thanks to their professional training. Using Taylor, I argue that the dawa group can rely on orthodox neo-Aristotelian training of moral development to withstand bystander effect within the group. But this also gives us a path to answer the worry of the bystander effect on the novice who needs a way to bootstrap their moral development. Here, the dawa group, as a group of people of mixed novices and experts, can help regulate the bystander effects for novices within the group because as experts, some of these women will stay consistent in their actions despite the mood influence and other more passive members of the dawa group. This virtuous link is especially potent in smaller groups such as local *dawa* practitioners. Paying attention to the aesthetics of conduct and character can turn many places that might be inauspicious for the flourishing of virtue for novices into a ritualized space much like a mosque.

There are, of course, obvious cognitive, epistemological, and pedagogical advantages that support groups give to people learning things like fitness, weight training, vegetarianism, and so on. We see this advantage among *dawa* groups from Germany to France to Egypt. As outlined in Kuppinger's descriptions of the meetings of the *dawa* groups she studied, before the formal lesson, the women themselves would discuss minute details of their daily lives, such as what

food items do or might include miniscule quantities of *haram* substances (Kuppinger 2015, 89). "No question is too simple to be asked in this group. Questions range from grand theological questions (what is the way to paradise?), to how to pray correctly (is my prayer invalid if I picked up my child in the middle of the prayer?), to local cultural questions (should my husband eat the non-halal meat at my mother's?), to everyday issues (can women who do not cover their hair dye their hair?) and consumer questions (is the salami on the pizzas in Turkish restaurants really halal?)" (Kuppinger 2015, 93). Jeanette S. Jouili, an anthropologist who studied *dawa* groups in France, emphasizes that many times, the reason women initially joined these groups was to ask questions that they had not resolved on their own about applying Islam in their lives (2015, 34). However, friendships would develop because these women were all trying to transform themselves; this motivated the women not only to continue coming regularly to these groups but also helped them apply these techniques.

Beyond simply trading information, tips, and methods for being virtuous in the face of everyday challenges, I want to claim that just like the Islamic soundscape, *dawa* groups also scaffold affect. These women would specifically select *dawa* groups whose female leaders and preachers stirred pious emotions (Jouili 2015, 42). The learning experience was expected to create feelings that would serve as the foundation on which faith was to be constructed. After beginning their journey to become more pious alone, many women who had undergone this religious journey told Jouili that the group was not just an added benefit, but a necessary part of piety. As one woman put it, "the path to God is traveled in a group" (Jouili 2015, 44).

Finally, I want to show that becoming virtuous is also about making sure that one's everyday relations are not holding one back. Not all stories end like Abir and Jamal's, where the virtuous person brings up the less-virtuous person. For a novice to piety, being held down by the

less virtuous can be disastrous. Think of the person who has decided to no longer drink alcohol being forced to go to a bar. If surrounded by a drinking culture in which social capital involves grabbing a pint at least once a week, the individual may easily stumble or slip back into a destructive habit. Two anecdotes from the *dawa* group help illustrate this.

Kuppinger tells the story of Susanne-Samiha, a lapsed Christian who married Enver, a semi-practising Muslim. Susanne-Samiha converts to Islam for the sake of the marriage but over the years begins a journey toward further piety. This comes to a climax in 2006 with her return from *hajj*.[15] She begins to don the headscarf and now feels the work she wants to do on herself can only happen with changes to aspects of her life and especially her marriage. "'I wanted to have a partner who also lived a Muslim life.' With her husband's deteriorating behavior ('he spent his life in bars, with friends or cars'), she felt they had little left in common. Triggered by one especially outrageous incident, she separated from Enver soon after. Subsequently, she wholeheartedly plunged into Islamic activities" (Kuppinger 2015, 84).

Mahmood tells another story of a *dawa* group meeting where a woman, still learning to be pious, asked a teacher what she should do with a husband who just would not come around to an Islamic lifestyle. Knowing the hardship that women in Egypt face separating from their husbands and the social mark it leaves on women, the problems of getting custody, and the economic hardships, the teacher *still* advised divorce. Her reasoning is important to the point I wish to make. The teacher argued, "'Of course—what else can you do? Live with a sinning husband, raise your children in a sinful atmosphere—[and they] will then grow up to be like him? How can you be obedient to God if you are living with a man like this?' She continued, 'If

---

[15] The Muslim ritual of going to Mecca once in one's life.

it was only a matter of him being harsh with you, or having a rough temperament, then you could have endured it. But this is something you cannot be patient about or forebear" (2005, 186).

Part 4—The Muslim Veil as Affective Moral Technology

In the previous two parts I reviewed the ethnography of the women's *dawa* movement to show a coherent, contemporary Islamic virtue ethic that can answer the indirect situationist challenge. This part concludes by looking at a critique of situationism from virtue ethics—that one cannot avoid every bad situation. I then use ethnography to show how the Muslim headscarf aids in overcoming this problem, turning to social psychology literature to show that this is a case of "enclothed affect" and arguing that the Muslim veil itself is a portable mood enhancer and ritualized space. Finally, I look back at the "high-bar" metaphor and how what we have seen from the *dawa* movement helps these women clear that bar.

Section 4.1—Can We Avoid Every Bad Situation?

John Doris argues that situationism's normative lesson is as follows: "by attending to the determinative features of situations… [w]e should try, so far as we are able, to avoid 'near occasions for sin'—ethically dangerous circumstances. At the same time, we should seek… situations conducive to ethically desirable conduct" (2002, 147). Doris cites the character trait of fidelity: Say a colleague who has a history of flirtation invites you to dinner while your spouse is out of town. Doris argues that we are too confident about our virtues. "You do not doubt that you sincerely value fidelity; you simply doubt your ability to act in conformity with this value once the candles are lit and the wine begins to flow. Relying on character once in the situation is a mistake, you agree; the way to achieve the ethically desirable result is to recognize that

situational pressures may all too easily overwhelm character and avoid the dangerous situation. I don't think it wild speculation to claim that this is a better strategy than dropping by for a 'harmless' evening, secure in the knowledge of your righteousness" (ibid).

The virtue ethics critique to this situationist solution is a practical worry. There are four reasons why simply avoiding situations is not feasible. The first is that it is often hard to know in advance if a situation will be good or bad. Michael Brownstein gives the example that if you are quitting smoking, you may not know whether to avoid a party since you might not know ahead of time if people at the party smoke (2016, 225). Second, since a situational trigger could be something small and could work behind our conscious back, there are often too many variables to calculate each situation in advance. Brownstein again cites the ex-smoker at a party: even though there might be smokers at the party, the presence of a colleague recovering from lung cancer might in fact turn this situation of vice to a situation where one's character becomes better and one's commitment to quitting strengthens (ibid). Third, some situations and relationships are just unavoidable: "I may regularly grow irritable around my in-laws, but it may be impossible, given family politics and the desires of those I love, to steer clear of them for the rest of my life" (Sarkissian 2010, 5). Finally, Taylor shows that focusing exclusively on avoiding bad situations may make one *more* susceptible to the influences of the situation. As argued earlier by Taylor, resistance to situational moods depends partially on the feelings of empowerment and self-efficacy of a person. If one takes the psychological view of a situationist, that one is primarily influenced by troublesome situational factors, this might end up setting people back in their goal of moral improvement (Taylor 2019, 321).

Section 4.2—From Enclothed Cognition to Enclothed Affect

Over the last few decades, debates have raged over laws banning the Muslim veil in places such as France, Germany, Switzerland, and other western European countries. One point that many Muslim women who veil have tried to get the public to understand is that the veil is no mere covering. As Alia Al-Saji argues, clothing is often seen as an artificial envelope that, when removed, reveals a natural biological body. Missing here, she argues, is that clothing constitutes a corporeal extension that cannot be removed without transforming one's bodily sense of self. "Such extensions affectively and kinaesthetically transform and recast one's sense of bodily space (as well as one's body image). The limits of one's body are felt not at the skin, but at the surface and edges of the clothing one wears, redefining one's sense of 'here' (2010, 890)." As one of Mahmood's veiled subjects attests, while before she may have been relaxed with her hair showing, her "body literally comes to feel uncomfortable if [she does] not veil" (2005, 157). For all these reasons, we might take seriously and not assume it is hyperbole when we read about the Quebec woman who states when asked how she would feel if a law forced her to take off her veil, "It is not trivial … [the veil] is an integral part of me…. If one were to remove it, it would be like an amputation" (Velji 2015).

Further evidence from social psychology indicates this tight connection we have with our clothes has the power to change our moods and can bolster our character. Adam and Galinsky have famously called this "enclothed cognition" to designate the influence of clothes on the wearer's psychological processes and behavioural tendencies (2012). Although Adam and Galinksy's original experiment failed to replicate, since their original article there have been at least thirteen studies conducted that are consistent with the enclothed cognition perspective (2019). In this section, I look at two specific studies that do not just show instances of how clothes affect cognitive self-representative behaviour but go beyond Adam and Galinsky's

framework toward what I call "enclothed affect." The first is Belen Lopez-Perez et al.'s study, which notes how the enclothed cognition work has overlooked the emotional consequences of clothing on behaviour (2016, 224). Lopez-Perez et al. looked to change this neglect of emotions by building on a 1979 experiment by Johnson and Downing; they demonstrated that wearing a nurse's tunic contributed significantly to helping behaviour while wearing a cleaner's tunic did not. Importantly, Lopez-Perez et al. were able to show that this helping behaviour was not just the effect of priming the individual to think of nursing but in fact the effect of actually *wearing* the tunic itself. Those merely primed to think about nursing did not help much more than the control group, while those wearing the tunic did. This effect of the clothing remained robust even when the cost of helping increased and qualitatively it was noticed that those wearing the nursing tunic were *faster* to help (Lopez-Perez et al. 2016). A more recent experiment by Pech and Caspar showed that those wearing the Red Cross uniform felt more empathetic and acted more helpfully than those wearing military or civilian clothing (2021).

Although there are only a couple of studies, it is worth looking at the social psychological work of the veil's effect on the wearer. In Hodge et al.'s initial testing, women wearing the veil reported not only lower levels of depression but that veiling felt protective (2017). A more recent study by Legate et al. showed that if it was an autonomous choice, wearing a veil predicted positive affective experiences, less negative affect, and positive life satisfaction; conversely, perceiving no choice in wearing a veil consistently related to worse affective experiences and did not relate to life satisfaction (2020). These social psychological studies indicate that clothing imbued with such affective social significance can indeed be something that lowers the bar of a situation's being an obstacle to our virtue.

Section 4.3—Evidence of Veiling as a Mood Shaper

I argue that veiling is a creative way to confront bad situations: If a positive situation cannot be brought to them, Muslim women bring the positive situation with them. If small mood triggers in the environment or relationships can cause such outsized changes in behaviour, we must also remember that these can be counteracted with small and simple strategies of scaffolding affect. Miller, for instance, shows that rampant cheating at school can be curbed with tactics such as reading the Ten Commandments, signing an honour code, or just having a mirror present (2009). In the same way, we should not take the simplicity of a cloth covering over one's head and neck as not important to character training. When attuned, our senses can change our moods dramatically—recall the work the Islamic soundscape does. Think also of the reason we wear an old comfortable sweater when we need some emotional care: its tactile familiarity changes us. As Miller argues, the intensity of the mood needed to temporarily change our behaviour does not have to be that strong. These are mood triggers we invoke on a daily basis, often without giving them a second thought (Miller 2009, 151).

In their own words, women who veil, whether it is a hijab or a full niqab, attach strong affect to the covering. These women use words like "piety" and "modesty" but also strong emotions like "pride," "elation," and "ecstasy" to the feeling of wearing the veil (Bouteldja 2011, 43). As Anna Piela relates in her ethnography of women who wear the full niqab in the UK, some said the niqab made them feel spiritually protected: "I feel more empowered. I feel far more confident. Even when I'm having a bad day…. But when I walk out the door [with the niqab on], every day is a good day" (2019, 11). Second, these women realize that the materiality of the veil is a large part of why it is so effective. Another woman who moved from the hijab to the niqab poetically articulates that "the niqab is a way of coming closer to Allah. It means that every day I carry my religion with me: even though I have it in my heart, even if I have it in my

head, even if I have it in my bag as I carry the Quran with me, I also carry it on my face, right up to my face because I'm looking for the face of Allah" (Bouteldja 2011, 43). As Taylor mentions, the feeling of empowerment can help people both with pressures by situational moods but also the bystander effect and so we can see one the mechanisms to how the veil can influence these women's behaviour.

Many women in the *dawa* movement enact modesty and piety wherever they go by wearing a veil. This occurs in two ways. At those moments she is conscious of being veiled, the woman remembers throughout her day of her transformative project. She does not scaffold the environment to change herself; instead it is as though she is already carrying around a pre-scaffolded environment to take her through places inimical to her habit transformation.

As Jouili argues, women who veil in France put in a lot of work to imbue the tactility of the veil with the strength of affect to help them change their habits. Jouili describes the use of the veil in training: "sitting, walking, talking, or laughing in a modest fashion all became the object of conscious self-training…. For hijab-wearing women, the headscarf played a significant role in this effort…. Seeing and feeling themselves veiled caused them to experience themselves differently, which in turn affected the way they walked, talked, gesticulated … the hijab's material quality, with its inherent sensory effects, matters" (2015, 84–85). To deny the collaboration of the veil with women's agency is to misconstrue the efficacy of material culture.

In using a veil, Muslim women strike a bargain with their secular surroundings. They will go out into a possible infelicitous public world that actively works to break their habits and rhythms, but they will also carry with them something that will nudge their affects and thoughts towards their goal. They face head on, rather than avoid situationally dangerous places and contexts. With the veil, these women can be the best version of themselves in that situation. One

does not go into battle without appropriate armour, it does not make one less courageous but in fact not rash and fool hardy.

Finally, there are pedagogical benefits to the veil. I began the paper with a dilemma, that without protection from situations, the novice cannot bootstrap their moral development. But the veil, like the mosque as a ritual space, a place where felicitous habit and affect are scaffolded into the environment so that one can safely work on and experiment with one's virtues. I contend that it is the same with the veil. Here, a woman's entire life experience can be training, safer in the knowledge that with the veil on, with her modesty protected, whatever moods and habitual dangers she faces will not be at their strongest. Again, like the mosque, the veil allows the novice to train, not by negating the mood of a situation, but by manipulating the situation so that the veil wearer can be by default in a mood that can help her bootstrap herself into being a better resistor and manipulator of situations. This is because with a positively pious mood enhancer, she does not have to worry about "falling off the wagon" into vice. The veil is a virtue buffer.

Conclusion

To conclude this article, I return to Edward Slingerland's high-bar metaphor for achieving virtue. I gave two ethnographic examples of the way that habit can be entrenched such that it provides a point of resistance against the encroachment of bad affective situations. In the metaphor, this allows the person trying to achieve virtue to jump higher in overcoming the situationist bar. I then provided three ethnographic strategies that the *dawa* movement uses not to combat but instead to *use* situations to further the achievement of piety. In the metaphor, this strategy of the *dawa* movement lowers the bar so that it is easier to jump over. With the higher jump and lowering the bar combined, I outlined how the *dawa* movement addresses the situationist problem.

In closing, I wish to point out two useful implications of this work. The first is to further the methodological appeal of using ethnography in philosophy. This paper has explored creative, real-world solutions to one of the thornier situationist challenges to virtue ethics. Second, this creative use of situations to accelerate virtue as well as the everydayness of this women's group can also allow us to think beyond elitist accounts of who can achieve virtue. Like Aristotle's famous wisdom of the crowds, here creativity and virtue should not be thought of as something that can only be achieved by a single virtuoso. Instead, as the *dawa* movement shows us, virtue is mundanely accessible within an epistemological community of practice.

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving*? Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Adam, Hajo, and Adam D. Galinsky. "Enclothed Cognition." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 48, no. 4 (2012): 918–25.

Adam, Hajo, and Adam D. Galinsky. "Reflections on Enclothed Cognition: Commentary on Burns et Al." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 83 (2019): 157–59.

Ahmed, Leila. 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Al-Saji, Alia. "The Racialization of Muslim Veils: A Philosophical Analysis." Philosophy & Social Criticism 36, no. 8 (2010): 875–902.

Alfano, Mark. *Character as moral fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Alfano, Mark. "What Are the Bearers of Virtues?" In *Advances in Experimental Moral Psychology*, edited by Hagop Sarkissian and Jennifer Cole Wright, 73–90. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Alzola, Miguel. "The Possibility of Virtue." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2012): 377–404.

Baron, Robert A. "The Sweet Smell of... Helping: Effects of Pleasant Ambient Fragrance on Prosocial Behavior in Shopping Malls." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23, no. 5 (1997): 498–503.

Baron, Robert A., and Jill Thomley. "A Whiff of Reality: Positive Affect as a Potential Mediator of the Effects of Pleasant Fragrances on Task Performance and Helping." *Environment and Behavior* 26, no. 6 (1994): 766–84.

Bouteldja, Naima. *Unveiling the Truth Why 32 Muslim Women Wear the Full-face Veil in France*. New York, NY: Open Society Foundations, 2011.

Broadie, Sarah. *Ethics with Aristotle*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Bruin, Boudewijn de, Raymond Zaal, and Ronald Jeurissen. "Pitting Virtue Ethics against Situationism: An Empirical Argument for Virtue." Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, 2023, 1–17.

Bucar, Elizabeth M. "Islam and the Cultivation of Character: Ibn Miskawayh's Synthesis and the Case of the Veil." In *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, edited by Nancy E. Snow, 197-226. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Colombetti, Giovanna, and Joel Krueger. "Scaffoldings of the Affective Mind." *Philosophical Psychology* 28, no. 8 (2014): 1157-176.

Coninx, Sabrina, and Achim Stephan. "A Taxonomy of Environmentally Scaffolded Affectivity." Danish Yearbook of Philosophy 54, no. 1 (2021): 38–64.

Darley, John M., and Bibb Latane. "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8, no. 4, Pt.1 (1968): 377–83.

Doris, John Michael. *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Fleming, Diana. "The Character of Virtue: Answering the Situationist Challenge to Virtue Ethics." Ratio 19, no. 1 (2006): 24–42.

Gueguen, Nicolas. "Effect of a Perfume on Prosocial Behavior of Pedestrians." *Psychological Reports* 88, no. 3_suppl (2001): 1046–48.

Gueguen, Nicolas. "The Sweet Smell of … Implicit Helping: Effects of Pleasant Ambient Fragrance on Spontaneous Help in Shopping Malls." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 152, no. 4 (2012): 397–400.

Herzog, Lisa. *Reclaiming the System: Moral Responsibility, Divided Labour, and the Role of Organizations in Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Herzog, Lisa, and Bernardo Zacka. "Fieldwork in Political Theory: Five Arguments for an Ethnographic Sensibility." *British Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2 (2017): 763-84.

Hirschkind, Charles. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Hodge, David R., Altaf Husain, and Tarek Zidan. "Hijab and Depression: Does the Islamic Practice of Veiling Predict Higher Levels of Depressive Symptoms?" Social Work 62, no. 3 (2017): 243–50.

Huebner, Bryce. "Implicit Bias, Reinforcement Learning, and Scaffolded Moral Cognition." In *Implicit Bias and Philosophy Volume 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael Brownstein, 47-79. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Johnson, Robert D., and Leslie L. Downing. "Deindividuation and Valence of Cues: Effects on Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 37, no. 9 (1979): 1532–38.

Jouili, Jeanette S. *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in Europe*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Kamtekar, Rachana. "Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Character." *Ethics* 114, no. 3 (2004): 458-91.

Katz, Marion. *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunnī Law of Ritual Purity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Kim, Richard. "Early Confucianism and Contemporary Moral Psychology." Philosophy Compass 11, no. 9 (2016): 473–85.

Kleingeld, Pauline. "Consistent Egoists and Situation Managers: Two Problems for Situationism." *Philosophical Explorations* 18, no. 3 (2015): 344–61.

Kuppinger, Petra. *Faithfully urban: pious Muslims in a German city*. New York: Berghahn, 2015.

Lazreg, Marnia. *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Legate, Nicole, Netta Weinstein, Khalid Sendi, and Maya Al-Khouja. "Motives behind the Veil: Women's Affective Experiences Wearing a Veil Depend on Their Reasons for Wearing One." Journal of Research in Personality 87 (2020): 103969–73.

Levy, Neil. "Of Marshmallows and Moderation." Essay. In Moral Psychology: Virtue and Character, edited by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Christian B. Miller, 197–213.

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017.

Liljenquist, Katie, Chen-Bo Zhong, and Adam D. Galinsky. "The Smell of Virtue." *Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (2010): 381–83.

López-Pérez, Belén, Tamara Ambrona, Ellie L. Wilson, and Marina Khalil. "The Effect of Enclothed Cognition on Empathic Responses and Helping Behavior." Social Psychology 47, no. 4 (2016): 223–31.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

McDowell, John. "Deliberation and Moral Development in Aristotle's Ethics." Essay. In *The Engaged Intellect: Philosophical Essays*, 41–58. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

McKitrick, Jennifer. *Dispositional Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Mejia, Santiago, and Joshua August Skorburg. "Malleable Character: Organizational Behavior Meets Virtue Ethics and Situationism." Philosophical Studies 179, no. 12 (2022): 3535–63.

Mernissi, Fatema. *The Veil and the Male Elite a Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland. New York: BASIC Books, 1991.

Miller, Christian B. "How Situationism Impacts the Goals of Character Education." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 2022, 1–17.

Miller, Christian B. *Moral Character: An Empirical Theory*. New York: Oxford, 2013.

Miller, Christian B. "Social Psychology, Mood, and Helping: Mixed Results for Virtue Ethics." *The Journal of Ethics* 13, no. 2-3 (2009): 145-73.

Moosavi, Parisa. "Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism and the Evolutionary Objection: Rethinking the Relevance of Empirical Science." Essay. In *Philippa Foot on Goodness and Virtue*, edited by John Hacker-Wright, 277–307. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018

Murphy, James Bernard. "Does Habit Interference Explain Moral Failure?" *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 6, no. 2 (2015): 255-73.

Nelson, Kristina. *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*. American University in Cairo, 2001.

Pech, Guillaume Pierre, and Emilie A. Caspar. "Does the Cowl Make the Monk? The Effect of Military and Red Cross Uniforms on Empathy for Pain, Sense of Agency and Moral Behaviors." PsyArXiv, 2021, 1–16.

Piela, Anna. "Wearing the Niqab in the UK: Exploring the Embodied "Shape a Moral Action Can Take"." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 87, no. 2 (2019): 512-42.

Pigliucci, Massimo, and Gerd B. Muller. *Evolution: The extended synthesis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2013.

Puett, Michael. "Ritual and Ritual Obligations: Perspectives on Normativity from Classical China." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 49, no. 4 (2015): 543-50.

Puett, Michael. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Robertson, Seth. "Power, Situation, and Character: A Confucian-Inspired Response to Indirect Situationist Critiques." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 21, no. 2 (2018): 341–58.

Rodgers, Travis J., and Brandon Warmke. "Situationism versus Situationism." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18, no. 1 (2013): 9–26.

Rouse, Joseph. *Social practices as biological niche construction*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2023.

Salomon, Noah. *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudans Islamic State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Saarinen, Jussi A. "What Can the Concept of Affective Scaffolding Do for Us?" Philosophical Psychology 33, no. 6 (2020): 820–39.

Sellaro, Roberta, Wilco W. van Dijk, Claudia Rossi Paccani, Bernhard Hommel, and Lorenza S. Colzato. "A Question of Scent: Lavender Aroma Promotes Interpersonal Trust." *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (2015).

Sarkissian, Hagop. "Minor Tweaks, Major Payoffs: The Problems and Promise of Situationism in Moral Philosophy." *Philosophers' Imprint* 10 (2010): 1-15.

Slingerland, Edward. "The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics." In *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, edited by Nancy E. Snow, 135–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Snow, Nancy E. *Virtue as Social Intelligence: an Empirically Grounded Theory*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Sreenivasan, Gopal. "Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution." *Mind* 111, no. 441 (2002): 47-68.

Stalnaker, Aaron D. *Overcoming Our Evil: Spiritual Exercises and Personhood in Xunzi and Augustine*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press , 2007.

Sterelny, Kim. "Minds: Extended or Scaffolded?" *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 9, no. 4 (2010): 465–81.

Sticher, Matt. *The Skillfulness of Virtue: Improving Our Moral and Epistemic Lives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Swanton, Christine. *Target Centred Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Taylor, Matthew C. "Non-Ideal Virtue and Situationism." *The Journal of Ethics* 26, no. 1 (2021): 41–68.

Taylor, Matthew C. "Situationism and the Problem of Moral Improvement." *Philosophical Explorations* 22, no. 3 (2019): 312–27.

Treviño, Linda Klebe, Kenneth D. Butterfield, and Donald L. McCabe. "The Ethical Context in Organizations: Influences on Employee Attitudes and Behaviors." *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* 8, no. 3 (1998): 301–37.

Upton, Candace L. "Meditation and the Cultivation of Virtue." *Philosophical Psychology* 30, no. 4 (2017): 373–94.

Upton, Candace L. "The Empirical Argument against Virtue." *The Journal of Ethics* 20, no. 4 (2015): 355–71.

Velji, Muhammad. "Change Your Look, Change Your Luck: Religious Self-Transformation and Brute Luck Egalitarianism." *Res Philosophica* 92, no. 2 (2015): 453–71.

Walsh, Denis M. "Environment as Abstraction." *Biological Theory* 17, no. 1 (2021): 68–79.