Moral Creativity

Exploration and Experiment in Moral Life

Yanni Ratajczyk

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van doctor in de wijsbegeerte aan de Universiteit Antwerpen

Promotoren: Katrien Schaubroeck
Benjamin De Mesel

Antwerpen, 2023

Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte
Departement Wijsbegeerte

ISBN: 9789057288067
DEPOT: D/2023/12.293/30

COVER ART: Flowers of Universal Flowering (1915)
by Pavel Filonov

COVER DESIGN: © 2023 Lief Simons

There is a continuous breeding of imagery in the consciousness, which is, for better or worse, a function of moral change.

Iris Murdoch, 1992, p. 329

A moral philosophy which should frankly recognize the impossibility of reducing all the elements in moral situations to a single commensurable principle, which should recognize that each human being has to make the best adjustment he can among forces which are genuinely disparate, would throw light upon actual predicaments of conduct and (…) would lead men to attend more fully to the concrete elements entering into the situations in which they have to act. `

John Dewey, 1984, p. 288

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

The first seed of this research was planted in June 2017. I sent an email to Katrien Schaubroeck and Benjamin De Mesel to tell them about my idea to start a project on what I called 'the importance of imagination and improvisation for practical and moral reasoning'. Between 2015 and 2017, I worked on a master's and research master's thesis focused on narrative identity theory and its moral implications under supervision of Katrien and Benjamin. During those years, I got interested in the role of imagination in morality - in understanding what we find valuable and important, in grasping and deciding how we should live our lives.

In November 2019, I started this Ph.D. research project funded by the FWO. I soon discovered that the term 'moral imagination' can mean many different things. Several philosophers already had identified roles of imagination in moral thought. Moral imagination might be understood as narrative (self-) understanding, metaphorical thinking, empathy, perspective-shifting, counterfactual thinking, and so forth. Yet, I felt I was missing something. I had the intuition that moral imagination affects not only our understanding and interpretation of the world, but also how we shape and change the world through action. I had difficulties putting this intuition into clear words until I found out about the rather young philosophical debate on creativity. I realized that 'creativity' was probably the best term to describe the moral application of imagination I was looking for. After all, creativity *is* about putting imagination into practice, and we recognize and admire creativity in many different human practices, from painting to problem-solving, and from cooking to playing chess. In this thesis, I examine a type of creativity that shows in moral practice, as I believe such moral creativity profoundly shapes the way we approach and solve moral problems and challenges. But before I begin, let me express my gratitude to those that have been important for me during the research.

First, I would like to thank my colleagues at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Antwerp. The department has been a safe haven for me for more than ten years. Being surrounded by so many exceptionally gifted, warm-hearted persons has been a real honor. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I realized once more

the importance of *doing* philosophy as an interactive activity. My research greatly benefitted from all the informal talks with colleagues that provided me with ideas and insights. I am grateful for the many conversations in the R building's corridors, during lunch, in a cozy bar, or somewhere in the sun. Thank you, Amber, Anthony, Catherine, Daan, David, Emma, Geert, Gert-Jan, Giulia, Guy, Harriet, Herbert, Jasper, Jo, Joke, Kris, Kristien, Leen, Linde, Lotte, Lisanne, Maité, Marlies, Martha, Michiel, Nele B, Nele VdM, Oskar, Paride, Suzanne, and Walter.

I would also like to thank my friends and family outside academia for supporting me and showing genuine interest in what I was doing behind my desk piled with books. Thank you, Andreas, Ann, Ernest, Ewoud, Gert, Jérémy, Lennert, Lotte, Maarten, Matthias, Merel, Nathan, Michiel K, Michiel L, Pieter, Sebastiaan, Seppe, Steven, Robbe, Teutë, Vicky, Willem, Wim, Wouter, and Yentl. Special thanks to my mother, Lief, for being the first to bring creativity into my life and for designing the cover of this thesis.

Some events and encounters played an important role in the research process. I am grateful for having participated in several stimulating academic conferences where I could test and share ideas, such as the *Moral Philosophy and Real Life* conference (online), the *Moral Perception*, *Moral Experience* workshop at the Hannover Institute for Philosophical Research, the *Apprehending Value* conference at the Protestant Theological Institute Utrecht, the *Wartime Quartet* Conference at the University of Durham, and the *Possibilities, Impossibilities, & Conflict in Ethics* conference at the University of Pardubice. I met many interesting researchers during these events but I would like to thank Evgenia Mylonaki, Fleur Jongepier, Jenny Zhang, Larry Blum, Leslie Jameson, Rob Compaijen, and Sophie Grace Chappell in particular.

In the third year of my Ph.D., I was lucky to spend some time abroad. I want to thank Dustin Stokes, for welcoming me to the Department of Philosophy of the University of Utah. I learned a lot from our discussions on (the philosophy) of creativity. I am also very grateful for the dear friends I made in Salt Lake City. Thank you, Agathe, Alex, Andrew, Drew, Evee, Ian, Katie, Koen, Lida, Lindsey, Robyn, Spencer, Stephen, and Quentin, for surrounding me with warmth from the West. There is only one ocean between us.

Many thanks to Katrien and Benjamin, for being my supervisors in the best sense of the word. Thank you, Katrien, for always being the kind and generous person you are, and for practicing Murdoch's loving attention. Thank you, Benjamin, for your persistent exactness and encouragement during every stage of the process. I felt so lucky to have two supervisors who cared for me and helped me to become a better thinker and writer.

And thank you, Katleen, for being on my side since the very first day of this project. You shaped the only possible context in which I could bring this to a good end.

Introduction

Creativity is an omnipresent part of our lives. At least, this is suggested by the way the term 'creativity' is part of our everyday vocabulary. It is considered as a widely used and celebrated human capacity to realize innovative valuable things. Our general estimation of creativity shows, for example, in the countless self-help books that promote creativity in countless domains of life.[1]

This broad idea and wide estimation of creativity are relatively recent developments. Till a few centuries ago, 'creativity' was a term firstly associated with God's *creatio ex nihilo* and artistic creativity was long seen as something mystical and inexplicable, due to a singular talent or intervention of the Muses. This changed in the 20th century. After Romanticism glorified imagination and creativity as traits of artists that enable them to deeply understand and profoundly change the world, creativity was gradually considered as a phenomenon that occurs not only in artistic practice but that shows in many forms of human thought and action. In 1926, Graham Wallas wrote his book *Art of Thought*, describing creativity as a cognitive process that develops in four stages. In the second half of the 20th century, a rapidly growing psychological interest in creativity grew. Thus, the idea of creativity as a human phenomenon grounded in human abilities became increasingly popular.

Although some philosophers have already written about artistic creativity, (see, e.g., Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche), it is only in the 21st century that creativity is growing into an independent philosophical topic. *The Creative Mind* (1990, 2nd edition 2004) by cognitive scientist Margaret Boden can be seen as the pioneering work that initiated this debate. Over the last two decades, the amount of philosophical work on creativity (mainly in cognitive science, philosophy of science and aesthetics) increased significantly. A striking aspect of this debate is the scarce presence of moral-philosophical topics. However, given the prevalent idea that creativity is grounded in widely shared human abilities and not

[1] At the time of writing this introduction the website *Amazon* has a 'Creative self-help best-sellers' page, that features titles such as *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*; *The Creative Cure: How Finding and Freeing Your Inner Artist Can Heal Your Life,* and *Creativity in Business*: *How to Be Creative in Business and Come up With Fresh Ideas that Will Change Your Life.*

limited to a particular domain of life, we could expect that creativity plays into the moral aspects of our lives as well; in thought and action that has to do with what we value and find important in life. This thesis starts from the observation that moral creativity is still an underexplored philosophical topic and the hypothesis that creativity is a significant part of our moral lives.

Before I turn to my philosophical exploration of moral creativity, I will offer an introduction to this thesis in which I will focus on three things. First, I will frame the central research questions of this thesis. Second, I will shortly discuss the position of the two central thinkers in this thesis: Iris Murdoch and John Dewey. Third, I will offer an overview of the general argument and the subjects of the different chapters.

This thesis is divided into three parts, each of which can be identified with a central research question. The question central to the first part is: 'What is moral creativity?' The central question of the second part is: 'In what ways is imagination at work in the morally creative process?' Part three asks: 'Is moral creativity perfectible?' The three parts should be seen as different perspectives on the central topic, that have a different focus and character. In Part I, I approach moral creativity as a phenomenon. By 'phenomenon', I refer to the most basic meaning of the term: something that exists and which existence we can observe. The approach in this part is an observational and interpretive one, where I discuss examples of moral creativity and specify what this moral creativity entails. Part II focuses on the process behind moral creativity. When Part I asks *what* the protagonists of my examples of moral creativity do, Part II asks *how* they do it. I specifically concentrate on the role of imagination in the morally creative process. Part III is about moral creativity as a characteristic of persons: I examine whether we should approach moral creativity not only as a phenomenon or a process, but also as a skill or a virtue that we can perfect.

Just as the research questions and corresponding foci of the different parts differ, so do the philosophical discussions to which the three parts relate. In Part I, I start from the contemporary, and relatively young philosophical debate on creativity. In this part I defend the claim that moral creativity is a part of our everyday moral

problem-solving that deserves more philosophical attention. The intention here is not so much to formulate one tight definition of moral creativity that excludes other definitions of creativity and moral creativity to which *all* examples of moral creativity must answer. Rather, I intend to formulate some typical characteristics of moral creativity based on examples and indicate how these characterizations answer to or deviate from other characterizations of creativity and the few explicit characterizations of moral creativity. However, I stress such a characterization should be understood as a guideline – not as a rigid formula – that can assist us in providing and interpreting phenomenologically sound descriptions of moral creativity.

In parts II and III, the topic remains moral creativity, but I will refer less to the current philosophical debate on creativity and more to a tradition in moral philosophy that advocates the importance of imagination in moral life. In particular, I will discuss moral creativity in relation to two pioneering models of moral imagination: Iris Murdoch's model of moral imagination as the imaginative apprehension of reality and John Dewey's model of moral imagination as the reconstruction of action.

Murdoch and Dewey are two distinct thinkers with quite different, radical philosophical frameworks that are sometimes difficult to reconcile as they hold different metaphysical presuppositions and a different view of the human mind. Murdoch (1919– 1999) is still mostly known as the author of 26 novels but she also left an eloquent philosophical oeuvre. In her work, Murdoch goes against the prevailing paradigms of her time: Anglo-American moral philosophy influenced by logical positivism and continental existentialism. Inspired by Plato, Murdoch argues for the existence of the Good and our ability to gain knowledge of this metaphysical reality.

A few generations before Murdoch, the American philosopher John Dewey (1859 – 1952) opposed dualism and idealism. I deliberately discuss Murdoch first and Dewey second in this thesis (and thus not in chronological order) because Murdoch is working with the older, dualistic model of the mind that contemplates reality that Dewey opposes. Dewey's great inspiration is not Plato but Darwin, and he considers reality as a transactional,

cultural-historical reality of organisms-in-environments. Dewey is one of the intellectual fathers of pragmatism (often named with Charles Sanders Peirce and William James), a tradition that aims to do philosophy built on knowledge of the practical realm and avoids theoretical, metaphysical frameworks. Murdoch recognizes in her work the concrete reality that surrounds us and that we can observe (other human beings, but also animals, objects, and so forth) and the transcendent reality of the Good. She considers the acquisition and improvement of truthful knowledge of these realities as our central moral task. Dewey, in contrast, limits himself to concrete reality and argues our central moral task is to intelligently attune and adapt our actions with and to the environment.

Besides these differences, there are also interesting similarities between Murdoch and Dewey: both thinkers question a strict separation of the moral domain and other domains (most notably art), they see a central role for the imagination in the moral life, they emphasize the (moral) importance of experience and experiential knowledge, and strive for a moral philosophy that can be lived. I believe these similarities and the differences of both models of morality and imagination can contribute to a richer picture of the morally creative process. Most notably, I think Murdoch's perception-centered model that emphasizes a reality other than oneself teaches us the importance of appreciation of things other than oneself in creativity. Instead, Dewey's action-centered model teaches how moral creativity is socially embedded and starts from within practice.

Although Murdoch and Dewey take a central place in this thesis, I do not aim for a comprehensive exegesis of their work. In function of the central topic, I focus on work where they explicitly address moral imagination. In the case of Murdoch, I focus mainly on 'The Darkness of Practical Reason' (1966), *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) and the seventh chapter of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). In the case of Dewey, I focus mainly on *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922).

The thesis consists of 14 chapters divided among three parts. In part I (chapter 1-6) I discuss moral creativity as a significant moral phenomenon.

In chapter 1, I offer five examples of what I regard as contextually innovative moral creativity; in which individuals or groups aim to morally improve particular situations in an innovative way. These examples function as the core examples of this thesis and range from historical cases to fictional stories and recent testimonies. These examples are (1) *Christmas Truce*: World War I soldiers arrange a moment of peace by impromptu fraternizations; (2) *South African Election Negotiations*: Nelson Mandela succeeds in negotiating the first mixed-race democratic elections by addressing his opponent in his mother tongue; (3) *Scheharazade:* the protagonist of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* stops the executions of young women by telling stories; (4) *Les Gazelles de Bruxelles*: volunteers support newcomers by organizing running sessions, and (5) *Lockdown dinners*: friends organize virtual dinner parties to sustain their friendships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In chapter 2, I offer a brief outline of the historical development of reflection on creativity. I first discuss the differences and convergences between the Platonic (poets that are struck by the Muses), Christian (God's act of creating earth out of nothing), Kantian (exemplary art as a result of genius) and the Romantic (a celebrated gift of artists) approaches to creative activity. I then illustrate how 20th century psychology installed a democratic notion of creativity grounded in basic human abilities and how this approach led to broader philosophical interest in creativity.

In chapter 3 and 4 I discuss my characterization of contextually innovative creativity in relation to the popular psychological and philosophical characterization of creativity as *valuable novelty*. I start chapter 3 by discussing a common approach in philosophy that considers psychologically novel thought as a minimal condition of creativity. I explain how this approach springs from Margaret Boden's highly influential distinction between psychological creativity (ideas novel relative to the creator) and historical creativity (ideas novel relative to human history). I show how her distinction is mirrored in other accounts (Dustin Stokes' idea of minimally creative thought and Maria Kronfeldner and Paisly Livingston's originality condition).

I then turn to two accounts of moral creativity that reproduce this minimal condition. I discuss Mulgan's characterization of moral creativity as the development and introduction of new ethical ideals, and Mike Martin's idea of moral creativity as psychologically novel responses to historically unprecedented situations. I argue that while Mulgan's and Martin's account share an explanation of moral creativity building on psychologically novel thought, their examples are significantly different in terms of the protagonist's relevant knowledge and experience. Mulgan's example is the Crow leader Plenty Coups' introduction of a new conception of courage that reached beyond his tribe's way of living, while Martin gives the example of Kenneth R. Feinberg's development of the 9/11 Compensation Fund that financially supported the survivors and the victim's families of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Different from Plenty Coups, Feinberg could build on his mediation expertise. I follow Martin's claim that Feinberg's moral creativity is no matter of inventing new values. However, I argue that the usual model of psychological and historical creativity is a model of invention that does not fit well with cases of moral creativity like Feinberg's and my own examples that I consider to be examples characterized by contextual innovation rather than psychological novelty.

I continue with my notion of contextual innovation. First, I illustrate how, in psychology, different categories of creativity illustrate more variation in the degree of novelty. This shows how creativity is a spectrum that includes e.g., personal breakthroughs as part of learning processes (mini-c), innovative daily problem-solving (little-c), remarkable professional breakthroughs (pro-c) and eminent creativity (Big C). In many of these categories, the point is not to think of something one has never thought of before, but to realize innovation in a certain context (e.g., the cook that combines two different leftovers or the professional artist that adds a new exciting novel to his oeuvre). I argue that this is true for my examples of moral creativity as well, where individuals or groups realize contextual innovation rather than think up fundamentally novel ideas. Second, I illustrate how contextual innovation is more about the spontaneous uses of knowledge and experience than the acquisition of new insights. Third, I argue that contextual innovation concerns an unexpected or surprising contextual breakthrough. I distinguish the contextual meaning of breakthrough

(the solution to a situational problem) from the cognitive meaning (a new idea for the creator) and I argue that the surprising character of moral creativity is due to the fact that it concerns something unfamiliar given the expectations of the context.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the value aspect of creativity. Since Kant's idea that products of genius should be distinguishable from original nonsense, creativity is generally considered not just novelty but valuable novelty. I argue that while Kant's value condition is still popular, his definition of value (exemplarity) is different from a contemporary pluralist value condition that is open to different interpretations of value. I then turn to the so-called phenomenon of 'dark' creativity, where creativity is used in morally wrong ways, e.g., terrorists that are creative in plotting terrorist attacks or necrophiles that find innovative ways of thieving corpses. Dark creativity might be a threat for a general value condition, and I discuss three responses to the problem of dark creativity. The first response says that creativity cannot be destructive since creativity and destructivity are mutually exclusive. The second response is that creativity, in general, must only be good of its kind (i.e., a creative terrorist attack is only valuable in the sense that it is a good kind of terrorism, not in a broader sense). The third response is dropping the value condition. I argue that the first response is unrealistic and that the third response is a wrong answer to the societal problem of dark creativity. While I prefer the second response above the two others, I object to the assumption it shares with the others: that we need a precise, strictly delineated definition to talk meaningfully about creativity.

In chapter 5 I characterize creativity as typically novel and valuable and moral creativity as typically innovative and valuable. I argue that a typical-atypical distinction allows for variation concerning the degree and type of novelty and value but that it is a guideline and no strict distinction that can be challenged by dubious or controversial examples of moral creativity. In chapter 6, I argue this is not a problem as my main aim is to offer phenomenologically sound descriptions of moral creativity rather than a definition to which all cases must answer. The point is to show the distinct significance of moral creativity as a moral phenomenon.

In part II (chapter 7-11) I discuss the role of imagination in the morally creative process by focusing on two pioneering models of moral imagination: Iris Murdoch's imaginative apprehension of reality and John Dewey's imaginative reconstruction of action.

Before I turn to these two models, I explain in chapter 7 how, since Kant's discussion of genius, several philosophers consider imagination to be a crucial mental ability for creativity. I compare the characterization of creative problem-solving as imaginative free play between the confines of constraints (e.g., task-settings, problems, challenges) to moral creativity. However, I stress that the constraints in moral creativity are not moral principles, but contextual particularities at which the imagination is directed. I thereby side with Mark Johnson and Sophie Grace Chappell's skepticism about the central place principle application takes and who argue for the importance of moral imagination instead.

In chapter 8, I focus on Iris Murdoch's model of moral imagination as imaginative apprehension. I first offer a general picture of Murdoch's moral views in relation to her contemporaries. I illustrate how Murdoch argues for the importance of inner moral activity with her story of M and D, where a mother-in-law (M) changes her mind about her daughter-in-law (D). I first focus on Murdoch's explanation of M's inner moral activity as a loving attention to particular objects of reality (e.g., other persons) and the visual terminology that is central to her explanation. I then argue how M's inner moral activity should be understood as imaginative apprehension, i.e., an imaginative perception aiming at the understanding of reality. Murdoch is convinced that the way we see the world is deeply mediated by our imagination. She distinguishes between imaginings that generate self-serving, false ego-driven images of reality ('fantasy') and the creative exploration of (objects of) reality ('imagination'). For Murdoch, getting a better grasp of (particular objects of) reality is all about transforming one's fantastical apprehensions into imaginative ones. I contrast Murdoch's example of M and D with another example of imaginative apprehension that I trace back in Martha Nussbaum's comparison between literary and moral imagination. Just like Murdoch, Nussbaum is convinced that imaginings shape the way we apprehend reality. However, while Nussbaum compares these imaginings with rich literary passages, Murdoch describes M's

apprehensions of D as a series of concepts (e.g., 'undignified', 'spontaneous'). However, I argue that Murdoch considers M's apprehensions as rich and elaborate as Nussbaum's literary descriptions. Murdoch regards thick moral concepts in particular and concepts in general as rich imaginative structures. I compare her ideas on (moral) concepts to Mark Johnson's metaphorical theory of concepts and argue we can accept Murdoch's claim that we imaginatively apprehend (and so perfect our understanding of) most concepts without having to endorse a general moralization of concepts. I end my discussion of Murdoch's model of moral imagination by showing how it considers our imaginative apprehensions themselves as a *creative* act since they innovatively disclose aspects and possibilities of reality that one did not see before.

In chapter 9, I address two possible concerns that might arise in response to Murdoch's model. First, one might worry that imaginative apprehensions distract us from reality and hold that we, instead, should aim to see reality purely without being interfered by imaginative interpretation. The second is that imagination might be dangerous as it may produce delusional or harmful apprehensions of reality. I answer the first concern by arguing that a distinction between direct unimaginative perception and reflective imaginative perception is misguided. I respond to the second concern by admitting that imaginative apprehensions may indeed be harmful. However, I defend Murdoch's idea that a key remedy against what she calls fantasy is not escaping but reshaping our imaginative apprehensions of reality.

In chapter 10 I examine whether Murdoch's model of 'creative' imaginative apprehension is compatible with contextually innovative moral creativity. I suggest that Murdoch's imaginative apprehension correctly identifies a part of the creative process but that this model of inner activity overlooks the importance of overt acts by which innovative moral creativity realizes contextual improvement. After discussing contemporary distinctions between imagination, imaginativeness, and creativity, I offer some examples of artistic and moral creativity that confirm the central role of overt acts in this type of moral creativity. I argue we must not consider (moral) creativity as a one-sided translation of mental ideas into overt acts: (moral) creativity is not imagination plus action but

imagination *in* action that comes in inner and overt variants. Murdoch aptly describes such an inner variant as imaginative apprehension, but I argue this model overlooks the importance of overt acts and tends to present them as simply flowing from our imaginative apprehension. This jars with the observation that moral creativity develops in a practical context, and that imagination often develops from within such practices to transform them. I end this chapter by suggesting that Dewey's model of moral imagination can explain this dynamic, as it regards imagination as a phase of action.

Chapter 11 is dedicated to Dewey's model of moral imagination as the experimental reconstruction of action. After situating Dewey as one of the intellectual fathers of pragmatism, I explain how Dewey approaches human action as the interpenetration of several operative habits. In contrast to the wide characterization of habits as blind, automatic behavior, Dewey thinks we can intelligently revise and adapt habits. He regards human activity as alternating moments of being in sync with the environment and moments of interruption by hindrances and challenges. I characterize Dewey as a proto-enactivist, since he objects to the Cartesian model of the mind that reflects on our actions. Dewey considers 'mind' as an umbrella term for several modes of action and considers consciousness and deliberation as a mode of action that arises when functioning habits are impeded. This is the point where Dewey sees a crucial role for imagination. Dewey characterizes deliberation as dramatic rehearsal, where we imaginatively try to find out what lines of action we could take are like. I characterize Dewey's dramatic rehearsal as a widening of experience, that includes more than the weighing of consequences but takes into account possible meanings, reception, appropriateness, affects, etc. I refer to Fesmire's interpretation of Dewey's moral imagination to show that Deweyan dramatic rehearsal is no individual, detached use of the imagination but one that is practically and socially shaped.

After discussing the details of Dewey's model of moral imagination, I examine the relation between this model and moral creativity. I start by assessing Mark Coeckelbergh's Dewey-inspired account of moral imagination and moral creativity. Coeckelbergh distinguishes Dewey's experimentalist idea of imagination first from theories that restrict moral imagination to the design of top-down

moral theory that he traces back in Plato, deontology and utilitarianism. Second, he distinguishes it from theories that have identified an imaginative dimension in moral reasoning (he refers to Johnson's metaphorical account and older work by himself) that still hold on to a contemplative model of the mind. Coeckelbergh applies Dewey's anti-dualist, experimentalist idea of imagination to moral creativity and I argue how this model indeed applies to an elaborate testimony of one of my core examples (*Christmas Truce*), where the imagination unfolds as a series of anticipatory and reactive experimental imagination-in-action. However, I argue that this does not exclude Murdoch's imaginative apprehension from (a reflection on) moral creativity. I stress that the difference between Murdoch's and Dewey's model of moral imagination should not be juxtaposed as theoretical versus practical imagination but instead show an explorative and an experimental model of moral imagination that can go together in a philosophical reflection on the morally creative process.

In part III (chapter 12-14), I further discuss Murdoch's and Dewey's model of moral imagination in relation to the question whether moral creativity can be perfected.

In chapter 12, I first explicate the difference between their metaphysical frameworks. Dewey's pragmatic experimentalism objects to a classic, dualist metaphysics and insists moral philosophy should be limited to claims about the embodied, historical existence of organism-in-environments. In contrast to Dewey, Murdoch recognizes the transcendental metaphysical reality of the Good. I admit that there is an unbridgeable distance between Murdoch and Dewey's metaphysical frameworks but that a study of moral creativity does not require a reconciliation of them. However, I argue that contrary to the clear difference in metaphysical presuppositions, their philosophies both emphasize in their own way the importance of experience and experiential knowledge in morality.

In chapter 13, I argue how Murdoch's notion of experience as the experience of something other than oneself and Dewey's notion of experience as a transactional, socially embedded process reveal two important aspects of moral creativity. I first argue that Murdoch's notion of experience reveals the importance of

evaluative experience in creativity. I explain Murdoch's idea of obedience to reality: the very reason we display inner moral activity is that there is a reality outside that deserves our attention. I then discuss Sophie Grace Chappell's application of this idea in her analysis of epiphanies, which she explains as receptive revelatory moments of sudden, intense evaluative experiences. I argue how this idea of revelation is different from the common idea of illumination in creative processes: Murdoch and Chappell describe evaluative experiences of things that exist independently from ourselves while philosophers of creativity describe illumination in terms of an idea that rises to the surface of consciousness. I then argue how such receptive value experience should not be seen as a passive reception of reality but as a sensitivity for (the value of) particular objects of reality. Just as creative artists show an appreciation to their surroundings and the materials they work with, morally creative agents typically show appreciation for the particularities of the context. I end my discussion by applying Murdoch's ideas of obedience to reality and value appreciation to dark creativity. What goes wrong here is not only that creativity is used for wrong purposes, but that the involved evaluations rely on a dismissal or a misguided perception of reality other than oneself.

I continue by discussing Dewey's transactive, socially embedded notion of experience. Dewey was convinced that all action and experience is a matter of doing and undergoing, in which individuals interact with their environments, including other individuals. He characterized dramatic rehearsal accordingly as a phase of action where we experience and react to imagined thoughts and responses of others. I argue that Dewey's interactive idea of experience and action shows that moral creativity often develops interactively or at least depends on others. I argue how Dewey's model of dramatic rehearsal as socially embedded action shows that creative processes do not only take off in individual moments of illumination, but in patterns of collective action. I think that highlighting this might serve emancipation and inclusion, as it might lower the perceived threshold on creativity resulting from an emphasis on individual illumination and the idea of a creative class.

In chapter 14 I examine whether we can consider (moral) creativity as a kind of skill or virtue that can be perfected. I do so in three steps. First, I discuss the differences and convergences

between Murdoch's and Dewey's ideas on individual moral progress and perfection. Dewey considers life as a constant process of search and trial and considers moral progress as the intelligent adaptation to ever-changing circumstances. For Murdoch, moral progress is about improving one's apprehension of reality (including the reality of the Good). I explain how Murdoch's idea of the Good must be seen as a metaphysical reality and a regulative ideal. I argue that while Dewey objects to any such metaphysical reality, his stance towards his ideal of growth is similar to Murdoch's stance towards her ideal of the Good.

Second, I reflect on different dispositional accounts that consider creativity as a (set of) skill(s) or a virtue. I first discuss Coeckelbergh's account of moral creativity that compares moral creativity to the tacit skills of a craftsmen, and I show how it is related to psychological theories that describe creativity as a bundle of domain-specific skills. However, while creativity and moral creativity definitely show such specific skills, it seems that it requires that the skills are used in a certain way. Some have therefore argued that creativity is about the virtuous use of skill. I discuss Matthew Kieran's account of exemplary creativity as a virtue of character. Kieran makes a distinction between minimal creativity (valuable novelty) and exemplary creativity that is motivated by the central values and standards of the domain. I criticize his account by arguing that many instances of creativity we might call exemplary are transgressive, i.e., they are at odds with the central values and standards or the domain or context in question. I argue how this illustrates a tension between virtuous and creative acts: virtuous acts are deemed virtuous because they live up to certain standards while many creative acts imply the questioning or transgression of standards.

Third, I defend my choice for a contextual approach to creativity over a dispositional approach. Such an approach pictures creativity as a broad phenomenon that can include the use of skills and virtue but depends on contextual factors as well.

The central goals of this thesis can be summarized as follows: I intend to deliver a moral-philosophical inquiry on moral creativity, being an understudied but significant moral phenomenon. I thereby aim to show two major ways in which imagination is part of the

morally creative process by setting up a dialogue between Murdoch and Dewey's thought. In this way, I hope to arrive at a phenomenologically rich understanding of moral creativity, to contribute to the philosophical debate of creativity, and to show the compatibility of Murdoch and Dewey's thought in this approach.

I. Philosophy of Creativity

1. Five Times Moral Creativity

Let me start by offering two historical examples of what I regard as moral creativity: *Christmas Truce* and *South African Election Negotiations.*

1.1. Christmas Truce

World War I is remembered as one of the most horrible events of the 20th century: more than twenty million people lost their lives in a devastating war that lasted for four long years. But during the first winter of the war, around Christmas 1914, some remarkable events took place along the Western front. Henry Williamson, who fought as a private in the London Rifle Brigade, wrote his mother from the front somewhere near the Flemish village Ploegsteert about something he would remember for the rest of his life:

> Dear Mother,
>
> I am writing from the trenches. It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Beside me is a coke fire, opposite me a 'dug-out' (wet) with straw in it. The ground is sloppy in the actual trench, but frozen elsewhere. In my mouth is a pipe presented by the Princess Mary. In the pipe is tobacco. Of course, you say. But wait. In the pipe is German tobacco. Haha, you say, from a prisoner or found in a captured trench.
>
> Oh dear, no!
>
> From a German soldier. Yes a live German soldier from his own trench. Yesterday the British & Germans met & shook hands in the Ground between the trenches & exchanged souvenirs & shook hands. Yes, all day Xmas day & as I write. Marvellous, isn't it? Yes. This is only for about a mile or two on either side of us (so far as we know). It happened thuswise.

> On Xmas eve both armies sang carols and cheered & there was very little firing. The Germans (in some places 80 yds away) called to our men to come and fetch a cigar & our men told them to come to us. This went on for some time, neither fully trusting the other, until, after much promising to 'play the game' a bold Tommy crept out & stood between the trenches, & immediately a Saxon came to meet him. They shook hands & laughed & then 16 Germans came out.
>
> Thus the ice was broken. Our men are speaking to them now. (Henry Williamson, 1914, as cited in Henry Williamson Society, 2001)

The events described by Williamson are now known as the *Christmas truce*. On Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day, allied and German soldiers across the front started impromptu fraternizations. There are many testimonies like Williamson's that describe how soldiers of both sides sang Christmas carols together and eventually entered No Man's Land to chat and exchange gifts. Rifleman Leslie Walkinton described such an encounter between the 1/16th London regiment he served in and the 102nd Saxon regiment:

> We met one another and had a chat halfway between the two lines of trenches and exchanged buttons, cigars and cigarettes. It was really funny to see the hated antagonists standing in groups laughing and talking and shaking hands. I got a German button and two cigars and a cigarette. One or two of them actually came from London and said they hoped to return after the war. Of course we didn't talk about who was going to win or anything touchy like that. They were 102nd Saxons and were decent chaps apparently. (Leslie Walkinton, n.d., as cited in Richards, 2021, p. 90)

Thousands of soldiers ceased fire and fraternized in such ways during the Christmas truce. Many other testimonies describe in detail the various initiatives undertaken, such as soldiers cutting each other's hair, taking photographs, holding joint burial services, and playing kickabout with an improvised football. [2]

[2] The most famous and mythical anecdote concerns football matches that would have occurred between teams of Germans and The Allied. This event became a popular symbol of fraternization and was re-enacted several times and used in

1.2. South African Election Negotiations

A second example of moral creativity takes us to South Africa.[3] The first free South African elections were organized on April 26, 1994. It was the end of Apartheid; a long period of racial segregation where the white minority dominated and restricted the rights of the black majority. However, one year before free elections were realized, a white resistance was growing. Under the lead of Constand Viljoen, the former head of the South African army, a militia of 150 000 people was formed to prepare for a civil war. Luckily, things turned out differently. A crucial factor that led to a peaceful outcome was a meeting between Viljoen and the head of the African National Congress ('ANC') party striving for free elections, Nelson Mandela.

> Nelson Mandela invited him over for tea. When Viljoen and three other retired generals arrived at Mandela's house in Johannesburg, they expected a maid to open the door. Instead a smiling Mandela greeted them, shaking their hands and expressing his delight at seeing them. Then he invited Viljoen to his lounge for a private chat. "He asked me if I took tea," Viljoen later told John Carlin, author of the new book *Knowing Mandela* (…). "I said yes and he poured me a cup. He asked me if I took milk. I said yes and he poured me milk. Then he asked me if I took sugar with my tea. I said I did and he poured the sugar. All I had to do was stir it!" Speaking in Viljoen's language, Afrikaans, Mandela persuaded him that a guerrilla war would lead nowhere. Instead, he urged him to stand for parliament in the multiracial elections. Viljoen left the house purged of warlike thoughts. "Mandela wins over all who meet him," he told Carlin. (Kuper, 2013)

---

commercial Christmas campaigns (see, e.g., Sainsbury's, 2014; Troup Buchanan, 2014). However, historians have called the occurrence of a genuine football into question. Historian Iain Adams calls the football match a 'micro-myth'. According to him, there is little or dubious evidence of genuine football matches, 'with stretchers for goalposts and the padre declaring Captain Blackadder offside'. However, he suggests that 'with so many young men milling around, kickabout games of football with tin cans, paper wrapped with string, straw-stuffed balaclavas or perhaps with a real ball inevitably occurred' (Adams, 2015, p. 1410).

[3] *Christmas Truce* and *South African Election Negotiations* first came to my attention in Bregman, 2020. However, Bregman uses them for other purposes.

Mandela and Viljoen represented two opposite visions of what South Africa's future should look like. When Viljoen's brother Abraham Viljoen tries to convince him to talk with Mandela to search for common ground, Viljoen is skeptical about encountering his 'enemy'. But Mandela's warm and welcoming gestures makes Viljoen change his mind about the ANC leader. It is the start of a series of meetings that leads to the organization of South Africa's first multiracial democratic elections.[4]

Christmas Truce and the *South African Election Negotiations* are two good examples of moral creativity, in which individuals or groups aim to (1) morally improve (2) particular situations in (3) an innovative way. Both the WWI soldiers and Mandela aim for – and eventually realize – moral improvement (installing a period of peace and fraternity; initiating a negotiation process towards free elections) of a particular situation (the horrible battlefield; a deeply segregated society) by innovative acts (singing Christmas Carols; approaching one's adversary in his mother tongue). Creativity is not a common notion in moral philosophy, but I am convinced that creativity plays a significant role in these two examples and many other cases of moral problem-solving that are worth examining. In the following chapters of part I, I will further elaborate on these different aspects of my characterization of moral creativity above. But let me first shortly explain what I mean by 'moral' in moral creativity.

Regarding moral creativity, I simply refer to creativity that is part of moral problem-solving. Hence, I use 'moral' here in a descriptive way, to point at a certain type of human activity and not in a normative way where 'moral' stands for a certain interpretation of what are good or right actions according to a certain normative ethical theory, e.g., actions that fulfil duty (deontology), are virtuous (virtue ethics) or that maximize utility (utilitarianism). The main goal of this thesis is not to argue for the compatibility of creativity with one of those normative ethical theories but, instead, to contribute

[4] That Viljoen left the house 'purged of warlike thoughts' should be read as a literary hyperbole. The more Viljoen met and negotiated with Mandela, the more he realized that free elections were the best option. But as Carlin's conversation with Viljoen shows, he for sure regarded this moment as a crucial and even transformative experience (see also, Bregman, 2021, chapter 17).

to a fuller understanding of the nature and role of moral creativity found in examples such as the two above and many other examples of moral problem solving.

While moral creativity is not a common notion in moral philosophy at all, it shows in literature and daily life examples. Take for instance the frame story of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night.*

1.3. Scheherazade

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night opens with the story of King Shahryar who decided to marry a new virgin every day and have her executed by dawn to avenge his former wife's adultery. After a while, Wazir, the vizier in charge of bringing the monarch new virgins, has trouble finding new virgins. At that point the vizier's daughter Scheherazade offers herself to Shahryar for a night. Scheherazade escapes her execution by story-telling: Shahryar allows her to read a story to him and her daughter Dunyazad, but Scheherazade interrupts the story when the day breaks. The king decides to spare her for another night to hear the next part of the story:

> At this point [Scheherazade] saw the coming of morning and discreetly fell silent. Then her sister [Dunyazad] said: "How pleasant are your words" "They are nothing," she answered, "to that which I would tell you tomorrow night if I were still alive and the King wished to spare me." After this, they spent the night in complete joy and happiness until the morning. (2004, p. 35)

This goes on for a thousand and one nights. Each night Scheherazade continues the story she broke off and spends the night telling more stories to Shahryar. And each time she interrupts her story-telling at dawn, the King decides to spare her life again. After a thousand and one nights, King Shahryar decides to marry Scheherazade as her stories changed his life:

> O wise and subtle one, you have taught me many lessons, letting me see that every man is at the call of Fate; you have made me consider the words of kings and peoples passed away; you have told me some things which were strange, and many that were worthy of

> reflection. I have listened to you for a thousand nights and one night, and now my soul is changed and joyful, it beats with an appetite for life. I give thanks to Him Who has perfumed your mouth with so much eloquence and has set wisdom to be a seal upon your brow! (2007, p. 531)

Just like the Christmas truce soldiers and Mandela's initiatives, Scheherazade's actions exemplify moral creativity. Faced with a dictator who threatens all the young women of the empire, she decides to offer herself to him. However, she manages to avoid her execution (and thus the execution of other young women) by a creative act. By telling stories that she breaks off every time dawn breaks, the leader's murderous behavior is paused and eventually comes to an end.

Thus far, I have given two historical examples and one fictional example of moral creativity to offer a first taste of this thesis' central topic. However, I realize these examples may not be enough to convince the reader of the broader moral significance of this phenomenon. One might agree with my suggestion that moral creativity shows in the abovementioned cases but be skeptical about the extent of this phenomenon's moral significance. One might reply, for instance, that moral creativity is a rather exceptional phenomenon as the examples seem to concern exceptional contexts and persons: exceptionally brave soldiers leaving the trenches, singular visionaries as Mandela that enter the political stage only once in a few decades, and (fictional) brave women that live under oppression. However, I think moral creativity is a more frequent and wide-reaching phenomenon that many of us display in response to daily challenges and problems we are confronted with. Let's consider two other examples.

1.4. Les Gazelles De Bruxelles

Several European capitals have become superdiverse cities. In Brussels (2023), one of the most diverse cities in the world, three out of four residents (77 %) is of foreign origin (taking into account the nationality of birth of their parents) (Statistics Flanders, 2023). Such rapidly changing multicultural metropolitan contexts unavoidably give rise to certain moral questions and challenges. For instance, 'How can one help newcomers or people with another

mother tongue to participate in society and develop their social life?' Many small-scale initiatives are undertaken to engage newcomers. The non-profit initiative *Les Gazelles de Bruxelles* started organizing running sessions as a way to combat social exclusion. Wim Poelmans, chairman of Les Gazelles de Bruxelles, explains that

> The impact of running is huge, we really notice that it makes our runners physically and mentally stronger. Very often these people join us under severe stress: they have no roof over their heads or papers in hand. Then it's nice to see how they find an outlet through jogging and their stress slowly decreases. (2015, p. 84)

Volunteer Harry explains how the low threshold of running together makes a difference for newcomers:

> Anyone can run, it doesn't depend on the gender, age, or background. We meet every week to run together and at the same time we get to know each other. These new contacts are extremely important for many people who have just arrived in Belgium. We don't just run to be healthy. By running, you can let go and forget. If you are under pressure, running can help everyone clear their heads. (Les Gazelles De Bruxelles, n.d.)

Projects like Gazelles De Bruxelles show how individuals and organizations use moral creativity to engage newcomers. In this case by organizing running sessions as an easily accessible way to participate in public life. Of course, cities like Brussels have governmental programs and campaigns that stimulate newcomers to learn French or Dutch, or help them find their way on the job market. However, such overarching initiatives alone often fall short to help people build a social life that extends beyond the working environment. Social inclusion benefits from or sometimes even requires small-scale, bottom-up creative approaches like Gazelles De Bruxelles in addition to public policy.

1.5. Lockdown Dinners

The need and impact of such creative approaches in addition to public policy is something many of us experienced during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, where the epidemiological

context and regulations made people look for innovative ways to maintain social relationships and fight isolation.

> In London, Caroline Fiennes's tennis group usually meets on Wednesdays at their club for matches, and then many of them stick around for dinner afterward. This week, taking the regular dinner date online has helped her feel like not everything in life has been upended, even as tube stations closed and rumors swirled about a city lockdown. Four members of the group logged on at the appointed time, with several of them eating together. "We had a nice chat — it was the usual random nonsense we talk about," says Fiennes, an adviser on philanthropic giving. "We're going to have to find ways to do the normal social things, or else we're all going to go mad."
>
> Fiennes is weighing whether, for future virtual meals with her tennis group, participants should have a phone with them so that if they wanted to break into side conversations, they could. However their gatherings evolve, she's certain that she and her friends will get better at it. "We have months and months to perfect this," she says.
>
> Fiennes, who considers herself a very social person, imagines that as the weeks of isolation wear on, the dinner parties could get ever more elaborate, just for the sake of diversion. She's planning to "get together" with college friends on Saturday for a dinner, and there's talk of having everyone cook the same recipe, so they can compare their efforts. "At some point, it will be like, "We're having a posh dinner, everybody dress up!"" she says. (Heil, 2020)

During the series of COVID-19 lockdowns, we first-hand experienced how such initiatives are not superficial at all but very effective ways of sustaining social life. In this example close at home, we see again how creative interventions bring morally significant contextual change and improvement.

The five examples I discussed above, ranging from historical cases to fictional stories and personal testimonies, reveal something remarkable. All of them display individuals and groups showing creative thought and action to bring moral improvement in a particular context; from singing Christmas carols to bring a moment of peace on the battlefield to organizing new ways of socializing

with friends during a pandemic. This thesis aims to focus on the moral creativity of such examples. Before further addressing this phenomenon, I will outline the historical development of creativity as a concept and a topic of philosophical interest.

2. A Short History of 'Creativity'

The aim of this chapter is not to offer a comprehensive historical overview, but to offer a brief outline of how western reflection of creativity developed.

2.1. Gods and Geniuses

The term 'creativity' first appears in Latin, but creative activities (without calling them so) have been discussed before Christianity. Therefore, it is a common practice in aesthetics and philosophy of creativity to include Greek (and most notably Plato's) thought about creative activities in a historical overview – even though this did not include the word creativity yet. Plato writes in *Ion* about what we consider today as an example of artistic creativity: poets who write and recite poetry. Plato argued that such artistic activity results from divine inspiration:

> Each is able only to compose that to which the Muse has stirred him, this man dithyrambs, another laudatory odes, another dance-songs, another epic or else iambic verse; but each is at fault in any other kind. For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence; since, if they had fully learnt by art to speak on one kind of theme, they would know how to speak on all. And for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his ministers, just as he does soothsayers and godly seers, in order that we who hear them may know that it is not they who utter these words of great price, when they are out of their wits, but that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them. A convincing proof of what I say is the case of Tynnichus, the Chalcidian, who had never composed a single poem in his life that could deserve any mention, and then produced the paean which is in everyone's mouth, almost the finest song we have, simply—as he says himself—"an invention of the Muses." For the God, as it seems to me, intended him to be a sign to us that we should not waver or doubt that these fine poems are not human or the work of men, but divine and the work of Gods; and that the poets are merely the interpreters of the Gods, according as each is possessed by one of the heavenly powers. (534c-534e)

Plato's ideas about art were significantly different from our contemporary views on art. He distinguished poetry from the arts, considering poetry alone an activity of *poiesis* – 'making'. In contrast, the arts, e.g., painting or music, were considered as mere rule-following and imitation (see, *Republic* 597d-e). Poetry, in contrast, was seen as a result of divine madness, where poets get struck by lightning caused by the muses. In a platonic paradigm, creativity only belongs to the poet, who brings something new into the world but only through divine possession. His artistic activity was thus inherently associated with the divine.

Latin introduced the concept creativity. 'Creativity' comes from the Latin *creare* ('to make', 'to bring forth', 'produce', 'to cause'), which is related to *cresere* ('to arise', 'to be born', 'to increase', 'to grow'). In early Christianity, this activity of 'making' was strictly understood as *creatio ex nihilo*, the divine act of God creating earth out of nothing. This narrow conception of creativity was increasingly challenged during renaissance, when different artists started looking for words to describe their individual artistic activities that seemed to resemble such creating out of nothing. The Polish philosopher Władysław Tatarkiewicz describes how several artists tried various expressions to describe artistic practice:

> The philosopher Marsilio Ficino said that the artist 'thinks up' (*excogitatio*) his works; the theoretician of architecture and painting Alberti – that he preordains (*preordinazione*); Raphael – that he shapes a painting according to his idea: 'Leonardo – that he employs shapes that do not exist in nature *(forme che non sono in natura*); Michelangelo – that the artists realises his vision rather than imitates nature (…) (1980, p. 247)

Tartarkiewicz claims that the Polish poet Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640) was the first to say that the poet was able to 'create anew' (1980, p. 248). The concept of artistic creativity as we know it today – though still restricted to poetry – emerges here. The poet is regarded as someone who can genuinely and without divine intervention, *make something new*. The sacred idea of creativity was changed for a profane one.[5] But this profane variant still came with

[5] Compare to Shakespeare's famous description of the poet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* act V, scene I (written in 1559) that still appeals to the Platonic idea

an air of mysteriousness and incomprehensibility. At the end of the 18th century, Immanuel Kant argued that

> One cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be. (…) No Homer or *Wieland* can indicate how his ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought, arise and come together in his head, because he himself does not know it and thus cannot teach it to anyone else either. (Kant, 2000, p. 187)

Kant considered Homer and Wieland as seldom examples of artists that possess *genius*: an exceptional talent that results in creations that set new standards for their domain:

> Genius is the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art. Since the talent, as an inborn productive faculty of the artists, itself belongs to nature, this could also be expressed thus: Genius is the predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art. (Kant, 2000, p. 186)

He further specified that genius

> 1) Is a talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently that originality must be its primary characteristic, 2) That since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e., exemplary, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e., as a standard or a rule for judging. 3) That it cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being, but rather that it gives the rule as nature, and hence the author of a product that he owes to his genius does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him, and also does not have it in his power to think up such things at

---

of frenzy and the Christian reference to divinity: 'The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven. And as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. Such tricks hath strong imagination' (1999, p. 54).

> will or according to plan, and to communicate to other precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products. (…) 4) That by means of genius nature does not prescribe the rule to science but to art, and even to the latter only insofar as it is to be beautiful art. (2000, p. 186-187)

According to Kant, real creativity was limited to beautiful art resulting from genius, and not applicable to other inventive and original activities (such as scientific activity) which he considered as a matter of mere rule-following that can be learned. Kant contrasts the poetry of Homer and Wieland with the scientific discoveries of Newton and claims that the latter's laws of motion, 'no matter how great a mind it took to discover it, can still be learned; but one cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be' (2000, p. 187). Kant takes Homer and Wieland as an example but, different from his predecessors, he extends the domain of creative activity from poetry to 'beautiful art' in general. However, this notion of creativity is still limited to 'genius'; exceptional talent that cannot be learned or understood. Kant's ideas of beautiful art and genius gave rise to the romantic 19th century, where the noun and adverb 'creativity' and 'creative' were used exclusively to refer to artists and their artistic practices (Tartarkiewicz, 1980, p. 251).

2.2. Human All Too Human

Greek, Christian, and Romantic thought held 'obscurantist' (it is inexplicable) and 'exceptionalist' (it is a seldom capacity or inborn talent) notions of creativity (Kronfeldner, 2018, p. 213). Today, the situation is very different. Creativity is not anymore considered something exclusive to (the activities of) poets possessed by the gods or genius artists. It has become a broad concept that applies to very different types of human activity. Whether we talk about preschool teaching, engineering, canoe slalom or business management, the term 'creativity' seems to appear. The concept is so omnipresent one might call it a buzzword or even hold that 'we live in a creativity-obsessed society' (Gaut & Kieran, 2018, p. 1). It would not be considered a strange thing to say that both the preschool teacher is creative in entertaining fifteen toddlers at the

same time, the engineer in developing the best materials for future-proof low-carbon cars, the canoe slalom athlete in traversing the tricky course and the manager in improving his employees' mutual relations, and productivity.

This spectacular inflation of meaning is a consequence of the growing psychological interest in creativity in common human behavior since the second half of the 20th century. Joy Paul Guilford's Presidential 1950 address to the American Psychological Association, wherein he called the neglect of the topic of creativity 'appalling' (Guilford, 1950), is generally seen as the start of the creativity movement in psychology. After this influential lecture, creativity was progressively taken seriously as a common human phenomenon.[6] This resulted in numerous research journals as *Journal of Creative Behavior, The Creativity Research Journal*, *Journal of Creativity*, *Thinking Skills and Creativity*) and several handbooks on creativity research (see, e.g., Kaufman et al., 2010; Runco & Pritzker 2011; Sternberg 1999). Most contemporary philosophical approaches to creativity exchange the mystical idea of creativity as a supernatural (or at least highly exceptional) talent for the psychological approach that grounds creativity in basic human abilities. But different from psychological research that can look back at a tradition of more than seventy years, creativity only received broader philosophical interest for two decades. The recently published lemma on creativity in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes how 'philosophy of creativity' 'is still a neologism in most quarters, just as, for example, "philosophy of action" and "philosophy of gender" were not too long ago' (Paul & Stokes, 2023). Central questions of this relatively young field concern the concept, psychological mechanisms, and application of creativity. *What is the definition of creativity? Which cognitive mechanisms are at the basis of creativity? How does creativity show in a certain domain?* Such questions are examined from different angles. Creativity research has different points of focus: it can refer to creative products, persons, and processes (*the three p's*), and acts. Creativity is associated with (often iconic) artistic products (e.g., *Starry Night,* the Matthäus-Passion, the Basílica de la Sagrada Família, technological artifacts (smartwatches, electric cars) or scientific realizations and discoveries

[6] See 'creativity' in Google Books NGram viewer for a graphic display of the spectacular increase in usage of the term since 1950.

(the benzene ring, the steam engine, vaccines). It is related to Van Gogh and Bach, to Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, and the processes these originators went through and that gave rise to their acts and products.

In this thesis, I will focus on a specific class of creativity that is barely covered in contemporary discussions of creativity, i.e., moral creativity. Besides some exceptions that I will address below, those discussions mainly focus on other domains (the artistic and the scientific in particular). More specifically, I will focus on what I will call *contextually innovative moral creativity* that brings moral improvement in a particular context.[7] I will flesh out this characterization in the remaining chapters of part I. In chapter 3 and 4, I will discuss *what* such contextually innovative moral creativity entails by (1) considering the central aspects of creativity that are commonly identified by the philosophical debate (i.e., novelty and value) and (2) distinguishing my account of contextually innovative moral creativity from existing accounts of moral creativity. In chapter 5 and 6, I discuss the characterization of (moral) creativity being typically (innovative) novel and typically valuable, and the phenomenological methodology I apply to moral creativity. In terms of the *three p's*, I will mostly focus on the product (the contextually innovative actions) in Part I. Part II will address the morally creative process (most notably on the role of imagination in this process). Part III will ask whether persons can be creative in the sense of possessing a moral skill or virtue that can be perfected.

[7] From now, when I use 'moral creativity', I refer to this type of moral creativity unless specified differently.

3. Novelty

Many philosophical studies of creativity explain creativity by referring to a set of sufficient and necessary conditions, or at least some central aspects of creativity. The most generally accepted characterization of creativity in general is *valuable novelty*. The majority of creativity researchers (in psychology and philosophy) agree on two central aspects of creative actions and products. (The painting of) Van Gogh's *Starry Night*) is considered creative when it brings (i) novelty and possesses (ii) value. Persons are typically called 'creative' when they cause or contribute to these actions and products (see e.g., Boden, 1990; Carruthers, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Kronfeldner, 2009; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Gaut, 2010; Grant, 2012; Paul & Kaufman, 2014; Gaut & Kieran, 2018, Sternberg, 1999).[8] The novelty aspect refers to the original meaning of creativity, as the Greek *creare* refers to the act of bringing something into the world. The idea that creativity concerns not just novelty, but *valuable* novelty goes back to Kant's claim that products of genius should be distinguished from 'original nonsense'. I first consider the novelty aspect in this chapter, and then the value aspect in chapter 4.

3.1. Psychologically Novel Thought

Creativity seems to imply novelty in one way or another: creative products bring us something new, something we did not see or experience before: paintings that exhibit new techniques and themes, musical pieces showing inventive melodies, and scientific breakthroughs that lead to new medical treatments. However, not all creative products are 'novel' in the same way. Margaret Boden influentially distinguished between psychological creativity and historical creativity (also known as P-creativity and H-creativity. The

[8] There is no *absolute* consensus on the two aspects or on the exact terminology. Sometimes 'originality' is preferred above 'novelty' or used interchangeably. In psychology, 'utility' and 'effectiveness' are emphasized instead of /in addition to value, see Runco and Jaeger, 2012. For discussion on the novelty condition, see my discussion on innovation and novelty in section 3.3. For discussion on the value discussion, see sections 4.1-4.2.

first category comprises ideas and artefacts that are novel 'with respect to *the individual mind*'. The second comprises ideas and artefacts novel 'with respect to *the whole of human history'* (2004, p. 43).[9] Examples of H-creativity concern products that are new to human history and that were never discovered or established before, such as the discovery of the benzene ring in chemistry and Picasso's introduction of cubism in painting. P-creativity, in contrast concerns all creative realizations that are new in a personal sense: novel relative to the individual thoughts and experiences of the creator. An amateur writer might for instance discover how the use of a stream-of-consciousness technique affects the rhythm of his prose. His application of the technique is only novel in a personal sense, as many writers have used this narrative method before him. Most instances of creativity are examples of P-creativity. Since it is history- or domain-changing, H-creativity is a more seldom variant of creativity that is, however, always dependent on P-creativity. The relation between P- and H-creativity is in that sense asymmetric (Kronfeldner, 2009, 2018): to be new on a historical level – new to humanity or a particular culture – it must be novel on a psychological level, but not vice versa.

Boden's distinction based on the novelty aspect of creativity is by far the most influential distinction in the philosophy of creativity. It sparked similar conceptions of psychological, non-historical creativity that stress the minimally required novelty on a psychological level for non-historical creativity. Dustin Stokes speaks about 'minimally creative thought': 'Some thought x is minimally creative if, for some agent A, x is the non-accidental result of agency; x is psychologically novel; and x could not have been tokened by A before the time t_i when it actually was tokened by A' (2011, p. 659). Thus, the general assumption is that, for an idea to be minimally creative, it must be new *at least* for the person that conjured it up. This is reflected by Livingston's distinction between h-creativity and P-creativity in terms of 'priority' and

[9] Boden's *The Creative Mind* was an important work for the philosophical demystification of creativity. She emphasizes how creativity 'is not a special 'faculty' but an aspect of human intelligence. (…) it's grounded in everyday abilities such as conceptual thinking, perception, memory, and reflective self-criticism. So it isn't confined to a tiny elite: every one of us is creative, to a degree' (2004, p. 1).

'originality'. She explains that distinction by comparing the performances of high jump athletes Richard Fosbury and Debbie Brill (Livingston, 2018). Fosbury exchanged the straddle technique that was common in high jump for a new way of jumping – now known as the Fosbury Flop. With the technique he developed, he set a gold medal record at the 1968 Olympic Games and a new standard for high jumping. However, nearly two years later, the Canadian athlete Debbie Brill developed the same technique with which she became the Canadian high Jump champion in 1969 without being aware of Fosbury's prior achievement. Livingston names the difference between Fosbury and Brill as one between priority and mere originality. Fosbury was the first – prior to his successor - to turn his back towards the bar before jumping. Brill was not the first to use the new jumping technique, but her attempts to do so were genuinely original since Fosbury's performance did not influence her in any way. We consider Brill's jumping creative, so it is argued, because she did not rely on earlier practitioners of that jump. This kind of creativity, Kronfeldner argues, just requires the absence of *copying*:

> Creativity as a cognitive phenomenon does not exclude the existence of an original, but a specific causal connection, copying, between a replica and an original, whether direct or indirect via a model for action. If this causal connection is absent, the person creating something is exhibiting originality, a necessary criterion for attributing creativity in the narrow sense. (2009, p. 581)

Boden's distinction between P- and H- creativity, based on novelty, gave rise to a widely shared philosophical approach to creativity as having the minimal condition of psychological novelty. In Kronfeldner's and Livingston's terms, creativity requires originality, the absence of copying between a replica and an original. In this view, creativity ultimately builds on what Stokes calls a 'cognitive breakthrough' by which an agent arrives at a thought that 'requires some significant change before which it was impossible for that agent' (Stokes, 2011, p. 675). These authors share a democratic approach to creativity, in the sense that they do not restrict creativity to a particular category of people (e.g., artists, scientists) or a particular application (e.g., painting, engineering). The only thing considered necessary for creativity is a certain cognitive process; the

emergence of a psychologically novel idea (Boden) that is original (Kronfeldner, Livingston), and thus builds on a cognitive breakthrough (Stokes). This makes creativity a general 'aspect of human intelligence' (Boden, 2004, p. 1) that shows in many different applications.

In the next section, I will consider two accounts (Martin, 2006; Mulgan, 2018) that explicitly discuss the moral application of creativity. Both highlight the novelty aspect of creativity by arguing that moral creativity occurs in response to unprecedented situations. Mulgan even identifies moral creativity with radically novel moral ideas and principles in response to such unprecedented situations. However, I will argue that the examples I offered in chapter 1 (and the central example used by Martin) concern contextual innovation rather than fundamental novelty.[10]

3.2. Two Accounts of Moral Creativity

Tim Mulgan describes moral creativity as the development of new ethical principles and ideals. He argues such moral creativity is needed to develop an ethics that is suitable for possible futures that are significantly different from our current societies. Mulgan warns that we 'naturally treat our current moral principles, values, and moral status judgments as timeless and unconditional' (2018, p. 362) but he thinks these might not be apt for different possible futures. One such possible future is what Mulgan calls a 'broken world' 'where resources are insufficient to meet everyone's basic needs, a chaotic climate makes life precarious, each generation is worse-off than the last, and our affluent way of life is no longer an option' (2018, p. 359). Another type of possible future Mulgan describes are 'technological' or 'virtual' futures where, for example, people can extend or exchange their life into a virtual or digital reality. Mulgan thinks our current ethical theories might not be apt for such worlds in the sense that their central values, principles, and rules are built on presuppositions that reflect our own affluent or non-virtual societies. He argues for instance that Rawlsian ethics presupposes

[10] I choose to start with Mulgan's more recent account as it explicitly builds on Boden's notion between p- and h-creativity (while Martin does not refer to Boden). Moreover, Mulgan does not refer to Martin, so I see no need to discuss them chronologically.

that future generations will be better off than present generations, and that we can therefore prioritize present needs but that future generations might face a scarcity of very basic needs such s as water. Mulgan thinks we need moral imaginativeness to explore the validity of our present ethical theories for possible futures. In the case of virtual futures, we must for instance use our imagination to find out whether 'virtual entities and events have the same moral status or significance as their real-world counterparts' (2018, p. 360).

Mulgan argues that we need moral imaginativeness to explore the adaptation of our moral concepts, values, and norms to such possible futures. Mulgan's focus is on what such moral imaginativeness entails, but in the first part of his essay he shortly distinguishes such imaginativeness from creativity. He holds that 'Moral *imaginativeness* explores surprising new ways to develop or extend one's existing store of moral concepts, values, norms, and idioms, while moral *creativity* puts moral imaginativeness into practice. Moral creativity (…) is a practical activity with a theoretical dimension' (2018, p. 352).[11] Mulgan describes what such moral creativity would entail by comparing it with the Crow chief Plenty Coups' (1848-1932) leadership over the Crow people. Building on Jonathan Lear's (2006) interpretation he argues that Plenty Coups introduced a new practice of courage to the Crow people. Crow culture's idea of courage was part of a culture that was traditionally shaped by masculine values and ideals of heroic warfare and victory by battle. However, faced with the overwhelming force of the US army that threatened their autonomy, Plenty Coups understood that the Crows needed new ways of being courageous:

> Plenty Coups sought, not merely a variation on a familiar theme (such as a new way of being courageous in a battle), but something entirely new: a way to be courageous in a world without war. This challenge required moral creativity, because traditional Crow ethics had no vocabulary or concepts to deal with this unprecedented and unforeseen challenge, and it was not obvious how to proceed. (Mulgan, 2018, p. 350)

Mulgan stresses that Plenty Coup's introduction of a conception and practice of courage was something *entirely new*. Crow culture

[11] For more on this distinction, see part II, section 10.1.

lacked the vocabulary and conceptual resources to grasp courage apart from warfare and so Plenty Coup's creativity is a clear example of moral H-creativity that brings radically new conceptions and practices to cope with rapidly changing societies. This is the moral creativity Mulgan is interested in, which he calls 'moral H-originality': 'how does humanity as a whole (or some significant subset of it) learn new ethical lessons?' (2018, p. 353).

While Mulgan's idea of a broken world and his example of Plenty Coups might feel somewhat futuristic or disconnected from our current life world, Mike Martin similarly emphasizes the need of moral creativity to respond to unprecedented situations with a more relatable example. Martin defines moral creativity as 'identifying, interpreting, and implementing moral values in ways that bring about new and morally valuable results, often in response to an unprecedented situation' (Martin, 2006, p. 55). He gives the example of Kenneth R. Feinberg's development of the 9/11 Compensation Fund as an example:

> In hastily creating the Fund, Congress did not specify the amount of compensation, nor which family members were to be sent checks on behalf of those killed. Congress did require that specific economic losses be taken into account, in particular the salaries of the victims. It also required that collateral sources of income, such as life insurance and pensions, be deducted from the amount of government compensation. All details were then left to one person appointed by the Attorney General. That person was Kenneth R. Feinberg (…) At one level, Feinberg was assigned a clear responsibility: compensate the victims and their families. He was also given enormous authority. He alone would be allowed to make the final decisions about the amounts of compensation, exactly who received checks, and even the criteria and procedures used (within the bounds of the law). Yet, although Feinberg was a skilled attorney specializing in mediation, he faced an unprecedented situation, full of uncertainty and risk. His first concern was to encourage all families to apply for compensation. In order to assure grieving and angry family members that applying was worthwhile, he directed his staff to make preliminary estimates about the amounts of compensation. He then formulated rough guidelines and expressed them in easily understood charts. Finally, he undertook the daunting task of meeting personally with thousands of family members, individually and in groups. (Martin, 2006, p. 57)

Martin argues that Feinberg showed moral creativity because 'he responded in a new and morally valuable way to an unprecedented situation—unprecedented for him, for Americans, and for history' (Martin 2006, p. 59). Like Mulgan's interpretation of Plenty Coups, Martin explains Feinberg's creativity in terms of H-creativity. He considers Feinberg morally creative because he was endowed with the task of setting up a compensation fund with an aim and scale that was new to the US. Feinberg had to deal with the consequences of a terrorist attack of proportions the US never experienced before.

Although Mulgan and Martin both explain their examples in terms of historical novelty, there seems to be a significant difference in terms of their protagonists' relevant theoretical and practical experience. The context of Feinberg was surely unmet – the grotesque character of 9/11 was an unprecedented event that started a new geopolitical phase for western societies. Yet it seems to be the case that Feinberg could count on more relevant experience than Plenty Coups could. Before 9/11, Feinberg was already considered as one of the US' foremost experts on major mediation cases, having experience with massive cases as the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and widespread asbestos poisoning (Rosenwald, 2021). Feinberg could profit from his experience with big law cases, while Plenty Coups had to reach beyond his ideas of what society was, beyond his conceptual moral scheme, we might even say that it reached beyond his whole idea of what human life entailed.

Moral creativity like in Plenty Coups' case seems to be rather seldom. Feinberg's moral creativity, in contrast, represents a type of moral creativity that seems to occur more often and that thus does not totally fit with the psychological novelty condition. Although Feinberg's assignment was to erect and organize a new governmental compensation system, his moral creativity did not concern the 'invention' of new solutions. Martin makes that point himself, as he suggests that 'moral creativity does not mean "inventing" moral values from scratch' but instead involves 'identifying, interpreting, and integrating the values relevant to the situation' (Ibid.: 59). He distinguishes himself from what he calls a Sartrean conception of moral creativity, using Sartre's famous example of a student that asks him what to do: staying to help his mother or joining the allied forces to fight the Nazis in WWII.

Martin reminds us of Sartre's answer being "You are free, therefore choose—that is to say, invent. No rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do' (Sartre, 1975, p. 365, as cited in Martin, 2006, p. 59).

We arrive here at a difficulty in incorporating all cases of moral creativity into the usual novelty-based model of creativity. That model *is* a model of invention, where one thinks up something new that was 'impossible' to think of before on a personal or historical scale. However, this does not seem to fit well with examples of moral creativity like Feinberg's. Feinberg does, like Martin says, something different than inventing. I would suggest his moral creativity is more about realizing improvement and change, rather than introducing something new. I think his case is similar to the five cases of moral creativity I sketched in chapter. In these examples we see individuals that display innovative behavior to bring contextual improvement rather than the invention of radically new moral thoughts and actions. Take the example of the Christmas truce. There were truces before WWI, and it was not that the soldiers did revolutionary new things (giving hands? Exchanging gifts? Singing together?). They did not aim for new ways of fraternization but for a (short-term) moment of peace and humanity. Their creativity concerns another type of novelty than either historical or psychological novelty, or - as I will call it - innovation rather than novelty.

In the next three sections I will compare contextual innovation to psychological novelty in three steps. First, I will show how innovation and contextuality of creativity are recognized by some conceptual distinctions that are drawn in psychological research on creativity (section 3.3). Second, I will explain how contextual innovation is about a spontaneous use of knowledge and experience rather than thinking up fundamentally new ideas (section 3.4.). Third, I will explain the difference between contextual innovation and psychological novelty in terms of the involved breakthroughs and surprises (section 3.5).

3.3. Contextually Innovative Creativity

Psychologists have made several distinctions between different categories of creativity based on different degrees of novelty. The most common distinction is between Big-C creativity ('relatively rare displays of creativity that have a major impact on others') and little-c creativity' ('daily problem solving and the ability to adapt to change') (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010, p. 572). Big-C (also 'eminent') creativity refers to domain-changing acts and products and resembles Boden's H-creativity. But little-c-creativity seems to differ from Boden's P-creativity or Stokes' minimally creative thought concerning the type of novelty. Little-c creativity is characterized as 'everyday, common, or garden-variety creativity' (Merrotsy, 2013, p. 474). Examples of little-c creativity given in psychological literature are 'creatively arranging family photos in a scrapbook; combining leftover Italian and Chinese food to make a tasty, new fusion of the two cuisines; or coming up with a creative solution to a complex scheduling problem at work' (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, p. 1). Such cases seem to be about *contextual* innovation rather than *fundamental* novelty. In most cases, the cook that combines leftovers will not experience eye-opening a-ha-moments (*I didn't know combining Italian and Chinese food was possible!)* but moments of insight (*ingredient x might go well with ingredient y, let's try this*) that enable him to serve a tasty combination of leftovers.

Kaufman and Beghetto have distinguished two other categories of creativity. Their so-called 'Four C' model of creativity adds 'mini-c' and 'pro-c' to the Big C/little-c distinction. They argue that the dichotomy between Big-C and little-c is too simplistic and that there are more degrees of novelty to observe. They explain mini-c creativity as 'novel and personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions, and events' and Pro-c creativity as 'developmental and effortful progression beyond little-c (but that has not yet attained Big-C status)' (2009, pp. 3-5). With these two categories, they draw attention to, on the one hand, creativity that is part of developmental learning processes (mini-c) and, on the other hand, distinguished creativity relying on professional expertise yet not eminent (pro-c). With the category of mini-c, they argue, one can properly distinguish between (1) 'the eighth grade art student (who learned a new and personally meaningful use for a particular

shadowing technique, albeit one that may already be well-known in the art world)' and (2) 'the more accomplished amateur artist (who has won a local competition for her unique and adaptive shadowing techniques that build on traditional uses of the technique' (2009, p. 2). Similarly, they argue that the category of pro-c helps to distinguish the creativity of 'the accomplished jazz musician who makes a living playing jazz (but clearly is no John Coltrane)' from the 'high school jazz student who plays (passable) jazz in school concerts and the occasional birthday party, wedding, or family gathering' (2009, p. 2).

I mention these different psychological categories in the first place because they show that the category creativity comprises more than the dichotomy between P- and H-creativity. Creativity is a spectrum that ranges from rather small breakthroughs part of learning processes over innovative daily problem-solving and professional accomplishments to historical, groundbreaking inventions. Since I regard creativity as a spectrum, I do not consider those different subcategories as having clear-cut boundaries, but as characterizations that have porous borders. There are no absolute (i.e., always true, context-independent) conditions that distinguish between those different categories of creativity. At most, these categories reflect certain paradigm cases of creativity but when we take a closer look at actual examples, it might be less clear which category would fit best. Is the cook that combines two leftovers creative in a 'mini' or a 'little' sense? When does the amateur painter cross the border between little-c and pro-c creativity? In this thesis, I will not settle such kind of demarcation questions concerning moral creativity, as I do not aim for a typology of different categories under which I can place my various examples.

What I want to take over from the psychological approach, however, is first the recognition for innovation in addition to novelty and second the contextuality of creativity. Thus, if there are two distinctions important to me, it concerns firstly the distinction between innovation and novelty, and secondly the distinction between contextual and fundamental, rather than between P-creativity and H-creativity, or between little-c and Big-C creativity. Moral creativity is already underrepresented in the creativity debate, and the accounts of moral creativity I discussed above have the tendency - as we see in Mulgan' and Martin's work – to interpret

moral creativity as something that brings historical novelty (Mulgan) or something that occurs in response to historically unprecedented situations (Martin). However, I think there is another type of moral creativity that has a place in our daily thinking and acting, which focuses on events, problems and challenges characteristic of daily human life and that aims at contextual improvement. This is the creativity of the Christmas truce soldiers who brought a limited but welcome period of peace and fraternization in their horrid environment of watery trenches, violence, and the constant feeling of their lives being threatened. Likewise, Mandela's approach to Viljoen dramatically changed the dynamics between two adversaries in a conflict that polarized the South African population. The story of Scheherazade tells about a young woman who tries to stop the King's blood thirst and the running sessions of Les Gazelles de Bruxelles offer newcomers low-key opportunities for social contact. Fiennes testimony of the virtual meetings with her tennis group is one of the many examples of how people sustained their friendships during lockdown. These are examples of contextual innovation rather than psychological or historical novelty. What matters most here is not to come up with ideas one has never thought about before, but to bring change and improvement relative to the particularities of the context. This does not require fundamentally novel ideas but rather the *spontaneous* use of knowledge and experience in a specific context. Let's turn to this aspect of moral creativity.

3.4. Spontaneity

Since creativity is not longer seen as a strike of lightning, several thinkers have stressed how creativity builds on knowledge and experience. Kronfeldner has argued that creativity involves the spontaneous use of knowledge:

> The problems (whether in art, science, or wherever) are often of such a kind that no already known procedure helps you right down to the final product: the knowledge you have at hand gives you only rough guidelines. In such cases you can use the knowledge you have already acquired, but you also have no guarantee that it is appropriate to do so. You have to tinker, you have to take a leap

> into the unknown. In this sense, creativity demands spontaneity, i.e., partial independence from plan, method or rules. (2009, p. 589)

The 'partial' in the last sentence is important. The German soldiers that started the attempts of rapprochement obviously knew the lines of the songs they were singing, and their acts built on the Christian tradition of Christmas as a moment of peace and reconciliation. Similarly, Mandela was no stranger to the force of language. During his time at Robben Island where he was imprisoned for 18 years, he learned the importance of Afrikaans in the fight for equal rights. He wrote in his diary that precisely because Afrikaans is the language of the oppressor we should encourage our people to learn it, its literature and history and to watch new trends among Afrikaner writers. To know the strength and weakness of your opponent is one of the elementary rules in a fight' (Nelson Mandela 1978, as cited in Galbert, 2019). However, his former engagement with Afrikaans does not make his later negotiation with Viljoen *less* creative. Creativity typically builds on acquired knowledge and experience, on preliminary ideas and goals. However, there is never a perfect knowledge of means and ends. Gaut calls this the Ignorance Principle of creativity, which distinguishes creativity from merely fabricating (where one has a perfect knowledge of the end as well as the means to achieving it in advance): *'if someone is creative in producing some item, she cannot know in advance of being creatively precisely both the end at which she is aiming and the means to achieve it.* (Gaut, 2018, p. 134, emphasis in original). This counts for artistic and moral creativity. Writing a poem can start from a vague idea or an artistic drive. Sometimes you start writing with a general motivation in mind. For example, when asked 'What makes you write a poem?', Sophie Grace Chappell answers that she aims to 'make something hard, crystalline, resistant, other; something itself, something with a life of its own, something with inscape, as Hopkins would say', and that she strives 'to memorialise, to preserve, to express gratitude for good things and to give some shape and dignity and perspective to sufferings and to bad things' (Chappell, 2021).

Sometimes – I am voicing my own experience here– you start from a more concrete but still embryonic idea that you want to develop. For example, I remember that a poem I eventually called 'The Boy on The Roof' started from the preliminary idea of

depicting a street scene as seen from above. The central image of the boy sitting on the roof emerged only later during the writing process. This image did not come out of the blue but stemmed from associative writing connected with the initial view I had in mind. Gaut argues how creativity is indeed compatible with a preliminary plan or (partial) knowledge of what one seeks to achieve and that therefore the anti-teleological argument (creativity cannot be a goal-directed process, it overcomes you) is unsound:

> there is creativity of means as well as of ends. An architect may precisely specify the design of a building, but his structural engineer may still be highly creative in finding out a means to realise that design physically. Second, a creative process can, and standardly does, have a partly indeterminate goal: a poet or painter may begin with only a rough idea of what she aims to write or paint, and her creativity consists in part in clarifying the goal that she is trying to reach. So the process is teleological, and deliberation about achieving the goal consists not only in considering instrumental means (those actions that will realise it) but also constitutive means (more precise specifications of the end). (Gaut, 2010, p. 1041)

You tinker around with initial ideas, and then something turns out to work: you have found the right phrase for the poem or found a suitable shade of color to paint the canvas. This dynamic is not exclusive to artistic production but part of the examples of moral creativity I have given as well. Consider, for example, the story of Scheherazade: she offers herself to the King as she thinks she might be able to pause or end the murder of innocent young women like hers. She starts telling stories to gain time and the King's trust. She thereby relies on her story-telling qualities. Scheherazade's first mention in *The Book of The Thousand Nights and One Night* describes her as someone who 'had read the books, the annals, and the legends of old kings, together with the histories of past peoples' and someone who 'was sweetly eloquent of speech' and that 'to listen to her was music' (2004: 6). She had certain qualities that she was self-conscious about. The stories she tells the king are not new, she does not invent them on the spot, but her moral creativity consists in applying the art of storytelling to escape execution and win over the king. Scheherazade's actions, the act of storytelling as such, may not be new, but her idea of applying these things to a moral situation is

an innovative act. Another way of characterizing such innovative moral acts, I will explain in the following section, is that they realize surprising breakthroughs in a particular context.

3.5. Contextual Breakthrough and Surprise

Remember how Stokes' idea of minimally creative thought (see section 3.1.) rests on the idea of a 'breakthrough'. Stokes explains a breakthrough as a cognitive breakthrough; an agent arrives at a thought that was 'impossible' to her before. With the term 'contextual breakthrough', I am referring to something different than the breakthrough of a new idea. The contextual meaning of breakthrough illustrates the breakthrough in the case of the home cook who creatively combines two different leftovers. The breakthrough here implies that from the different ingredients that are in the fridge that are not obvious to combine, a tasty dish finally emerges on the table. This is a breakthrough in the sense that something tasty can be eaten by the cook and his company due to the cook's innovative problem-solving. This is similar to the breakthrough(s) that are part of the painter's tweaking of the canvas, where the added brushes increasingly reveal the final shape of the painting.

The reason to invoke this sense of breakthrough is not that I want to deny the place of cognitive breakthroughs in morally creative processes. That would be a strange strategy: creative processes, including morally contextually innovative ones, typically include moments of insight. In part II and III, I will elaborate on how such insights come about through imagination. So my introduction of a contextual breakthrough here should not be read as a denial of the place of cognitive breakthroughs in morally creative processes, but as a mitigation of the idea of a cognitive breakthrough as *the* criterion of moral creativity. This because, in my view, the contextual sense of breakthrough has the most weight in this type of creativity; the soldiers providing a moment of peace and fraternization, Mandela managing to negotiate with Viljoen, Scheherazade stopping the series of killings, etc. What is central here is the innovative solution of a situational problem - a contextual breakthrough - rather than the emergence of a psychologically novel idea. Those innovative solutions make moral creativity surprising.

That surprising character is for instance expressed in Viljoen's testimony: the way Mandela received him in the midst of the polarized political climate was unusual. Mandela's intervention exceeded the expectations usually associated with that context.

Boden defines creativity in *The Creative Mind* as the 'ability to come up with ideas or artifacts that are new, surprising, and valuable' (2004, p. 1). In line with her novelty criterion of creativity, Boden approaches creativity as provoking the question of 'how did *that* person manage to come up with it, given that *they* had never thought of it before?' (2004, p. 2, emphasis in original). Boden distinguishes between three 'forms' of creativity – combinatorial, exploratory, and transformational creativity – based on the kind of surprise they evoke. Boden approaches surprise in two ways. First, she explains creativity's surprisingness as the surprisingness of the product in relation to the public, secondly (and this is her main approach to creativity's surprisingness) she explains its surprisingness in relation to the creator's previously held ideas.[12] Combinatorial creativity implies existing elements ideas, and materials that are combined in new ways. They are surprising in the sense that they concern unfamiliar combinations but not *that* surprising since the combinations are made of ideas we already know. Think for instance of analogies, e.g., Forrest Gump telling the older lady sitting next to him on the bench that 'life is like a box of chocolates'). In her explanation of exploratory and transformational creativity, Boden refers to what she calls a conceptual space. Boden explains a conceptual space as 'any disciplined way of thinking that is familiar to (and valued by) a

[12] She approaches the surprisingness of combinatorial creativity in the first way: 'an idea can be surprising because it is unknown, or even unlikely - like a hundred-to-one outsider winning the Derby.' She approaches the surprisingness of exploratory and transformative creativity in the second way. In the case of exploratory creativity, she argues, 'you are surprised because you had not realised that this particular idea was part of it. Maybe you are even intrigued to discover that an idea of this general type fits into the known style'. Transformational creativity, then, concerns 'the surprise you feel when encountering a seemingly impossible idea. It just can't have occurred to anyone's mind, you feel - and yet it does. It may even lead to other ideas you had thought impossible only yesterday' (2004, pp. 2-3).

certain social group' (2004, p. 4). Her idea of conceptual space is very wide, it includes styles of art (e.g., realism, impressionism, cubism in painting), scientific theories (e.g., classical physics, theoretical quantum mechanics) or even trends in a specific domain ('*nouvelle cuisine* and good old meat and two veg') (2004, p. 4).

Instances of exploratory creativity are cases where someone comes up with a new idea within a conceptual space; Boden compares exploratory creativity with deviating from a known route:

> You can keep up to the motorways, and only look at the thick red lines on your map. But suppose, for some reason (a police diversion, or a call of nature), you drive off onto a smaller road. When you set out, you didn't even know it existed. But of course, if you unfold the map you'll see it marked there. And perhaps you ask yourself 'I wonder what's round that corner?' and drive round it to find out. Maybe you come to a pretty village, or a council estate; or perhaps you end up in a cul-de-sac, or back on the motorway you came off in the first place. All these things were always possible (and they're all represented on the map). But you'd never noticed them before – and you wouldn't have done so now, if you hadn't got into an exploratory frame of mind. (2004, p. 5)

The third kind of creativity she distinguishes, transformational creativity, pushes the boundaries of the conceptual space in question and is so surprising that it brings about the question 'But how can that possibly happen' (2004, p. 6). Those 'deepest cases of creativity involve someone's thinking something which, with respect to the conceptual spaces in their minds, they couldn't have thought before. The supposedly impossible idea can come about only if the creator changes the pre-existing style in some way' (2004, p. 6). In art, cases of transformational creativity typically give rise to new schools and movements. The ways in which early 20th-century French painters Picasso and Braque started to depict objects not from one perspective but from a multitude of viewpoints assembled on one canvas were clear instances of transformational creativity that gave rise to the school of cubism.

I assume Boden would categorize the type of moral creativity I discuss here as instances of combinatorial or exploratory creativity, where different ideas are combined, or the possibilities of a context are explored. Since I am not committed to a typology of different

subcategories of contextually innovative moral creativity, I will not choose one category to apply. However, it is reasonable to say that contextually innovative creativity is not a case of transformational creativity. After all, transformational creativity is about H-creativity that radically changes a whole conceptual domain. Moral examples of such creativity are rather difficult to come up with. Plenty Coups' example seems to be one example of what such transformational moral creativity would be: because you can argue (like Mulgan) that he brings in a new idea and practice of courage that could not be imagined in the Crow culture. Another example might be *The Concert For Bangladesh*, a pair of benefit concerts played in 1971 at Madison Square Garden organized by George Harrison and Ravi Shankar. This was a radical new way of raising awareness of and raising funds for catastrophes in third-world countries. I accept that there are reasons to study such exceptional, transformational moral h-creativity (e.g., when discussing societal and global changes and challenges as Mulgan (2018) did. However, my interest here lies in contextually innovative creativity as part of our daily moral lives.

Rather than Boden's distinctions between different forms of creativity, I find her reference to conceptual spaces interesting. After all, her explanation of creativity referring to conceptual spaces brings in a contextual element to her approach to creativity based on psychological novelty, i.e. the novelty of ideas can only be understood in terms of the structures of a contextual space that forms the background of these ideas. The innovative acts that are central to my examples of creativity are in a comparable way related to the situation (the context in which these acts are performed) as novel ideas are related to a conceptual space. They bring an unfamiliar possibility into a given situation and are therefore surprising. During an entrenched war, you do not expect to suddenly find people singing together, just as Viljoen did not expect Mandela to address him in his own language. Their actions can also be surprising to the initiators themselves, but the type of surprise I primarily associate with contextually innovative moral creativity is this kind of surprise: where a contextual breakthrough is achieved in an innovative way.

In chapter 3, I discussed the novelty aspect of creativity and moral creativity. After considering the common philosophical approach to

creativity as having the condition of psychologically novel thought, I suggested that the creativity central to this thesis is about contextual innovation rather than fundamental novelty. With help of this characterization, I explained my examples of moral creativity as cases where individuals realize contextual breakthroughs, in the sense that they realize moral improvement by bringing a solution to a situational problem that is surprising given the expectations of the given context. I will now turn to the value aspect of creativity and moral creativity.

4. Value

In the last chapter, I explained moral creativity as the phenomenon where individuals or groups realize innovative, contextual moral *improvement*. All those innovative acts are valuable. The WWII soldiers fraternized with the other side of the battlefield, Scheherazade's continuous storytelling protects other young women from a horrible fate, Mandela starts up negotiations between two deeply divided political camps, Les Gazelles De Bruxelles help newcomers to reduce their stress and participate in public life, and Fiennes' tennis group sustain their friendship by organizing virtual dinners. Many philosophers consider value as a condition of creativity. The idea that creativity must imply value goes back to Kant's discussion of genius, who argued that the work of genius must be distinguishable from 'original nonsense' (2001, p. 186). His idea is that we should be able to make a difference between a creative painting and a nonsensical patchwork of paint strokes. Think about the difference between a Jackson Pollock painting and intricate, unique traces of paintbrushes that have accidentally fallen on a white canvas. The rationale behind Kant's value criterion is that we must be able to distinguish between the two, and thus must be able to explain why the first is creative and the latter is not.

A general value condition might work as a good rule of thumb, but it might only bring a limited understanding of concrete cases of creativity. Imagine a stubborn museum visitor who asks the museum guide why Pollock's *Converegence* is valuable, as he feels it seems to be merely some splashing around on a canvas. Stokes has argued that a general value condition has little explanatory advantage, and that we should search for reasons why a certain creative product is valuable:

> If one asks about the nature of, say, a carburettor and is told, "A carburettor is a very useful part of an internal combustion engine," one comes away with no insight on what a carburettor does or how it does it. At best, one has a reason via testimony for thinking that a carburettor is valuable, but no idea *why* it might be valuable (…) A carburettor may be valued *in virtue of* its individuative characteristics or functional properties, but this does not imply that value is one of those properties. The same is plausibly true of

> creativity. And so a better strategy for analyzing creativity is to grant that creative things are valuable, and then attempt to identify reasons for thinking they are valuable - conditions on creative thought and behaviour. (2011, pp. 275-276)

One reason we consider creativity valuable is that creativity typically contributes to fulfilling a certain goal. In psychology, value is usually qualified in these terms, as 'usefulness' (Barron, 1955), 'fit', 'appropriateness' (Runco, 1988), or 'effectiveness'. (Runco & Jaegher, 2012)[13] A manager's innovative reorganization of the workspace is valuable as it contributes to employee cooperation. Mandela's creativity is valuable because it made successful peace negotiations possible.

However, creative things can be valuable for other reasons: 'value' refers to more than the instrumental value of reaching a goal. Creativity, being the widespread phenomenon it is, occurs in different domains and contexts. Consequently, the type of value of creativity is thus essentially 'context-dependent' (Astola et al., 2022, p. 209): it depends on the domain or context. First, the type of value varies between different domains: scientific discovery is valuable in a different way than an artwork. Scientific discovery is valuable as it contributes to more scientific knowledge on a specific topic, while this is not a typical aspect of art.[14] Second, the value varies with a given domain. Take the artistic domain. Kant calls the work of genius valuable because it is 'exemplary': Pollock's paintings serve as an example for future painting practice, which would not be the case where paint has accidentally fallen onto a canvas. However, this is a quite specific reason that follows from Kant's restriction of creativity to genius. Today we consider creativity a broader category and we consider creative artworks valuable for multiple reasons. Seen from the perspective of the artist, finding a way of composing, and recording the record she wants to make or the poem she wants to write can be seen as solving a problem. However, there are many more ways in which we might say that art is valuable. We might say

[13] For a general chronological overview of the forming of a standard definition of creativity in psychology, see Runco & Jaegher, 2012.

[14] I do not mean to say that it is completely out of question that a particular work of art could contribute to scientific knowledge, but simply that this would be rather seldom or atypical.

that an artwork is valuable as it expresses certain emotions, has a very inventive form, or that certain artworks are politically valuable and so on.

4.1. Dark Creativity

Not every example of creativity is valuable in the same way. To understand its exact value, we have to look at the exact example and context and/or domain in question. Because of this variation in value, it is impossible to build in all those reasons in one general definition of creativity. But this might not be necessary: we could perfectly say that creativity is *generally valuable* across different domains and contexts, while the exact *type* of value varies from domain to domain or from context to context. The difference between this idea of creativity being generally valuable and the Kantian value criterion is that the former does not need to pick one reason for being valuable. In other words, it is a pluralist value condition that is open to different interpretations of value.

However, there seems to be one category of creativity that poses a challenge for such a pluralist value condition, i.e., the existence of so-called *dark* or *malevolent* creativity. Consider for instance the main character of Gabrielle Wittkop's controversial novel *The Necrophiliac*, where the fictional protagonist describes how he found inventive ways of stealing corpses:

> I had to come up with a seamless plan. In less than an hour, it was developed. (…) Today there are only a few rickety houses, just two or three hundred years old, there where once stood the villa of Seianus. All the lights were out except the lamppost at the edge of the pier that blinks each night with a false glow. There was the sound of crackling rain and the sea's undertow between the rocks. I headed toward a boat I had spotted that afternoon, a nasty old plank-board shell that I detached without noise. I rowed to the hotel beach. There, too, the lights were out. Unable to land on the pebbly shore, I took off my pants, attached the boat to a rocky protrusion, and, entering the water up to my thighs, I advanced toward the grotto. (…)I lifted up the cover that concealed the two bodies and carried them one at a time into the boat. Then I went back to Seiano, rowing as quickly as I could. (…) I carried the Swedes into the car, where I had some difficulty get- ting them in. They were already stiff, but I managed to arrange them diagonally

> on the backseat, the one against the other, hidden with a cover. (2011, p. 93)

This example is fictional, but we might think of actual cases of gruesome deeds that benefit from creative thought and action. One case that is especially popular in the psychological literature on dark creativity is 9/11, where Al-Qaeda terrorists caused thousands of deaths by hijacking several planes and crashing into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon: [15]

> If the terrorist acts of 9/11 had not been novel, it stands to reason that they would have been anticipated. If they had been anticipated, in other words if the mode of attack had been known in advance, successful action would, or at least could, have been taken to prevent them. There is also no doubt that the terrorist acts in question were highly successful (regardless of whether we agree with what was done), so that it must be conceded that they were both surprising and also effective. In other words, the attacks of 9/11 must be regarded as highly creative. (Cropley et. al 2008, p. 108)[16]

Necrophiles and terrorists seem to be creative in what they do, both in the innovative type described in Wittkop's novel as the historically novel type we see in 9/11. Such dark creativity challenges the idea of a general value condition of creativity. After all, innovative ways of stealing corpses or plotting terrorist attacks seem to be anything but valuable.

4.2. Defenses Against the Dark Arts

Several responses have been offered to the problem of dark creativity. One response says that dark creativity is conceptually

---

[15] Dark creativity is, especially in psychology, a far more popular topic than moral creativity that has resulted in several research articles and edited volumes (see, e.g., Cropley et al., 2008; Cropley et al., 2010; Kapoor & Kaufman, 2023).

[16] See the artist Damien Hirst's often-cited controversial statements on 9/11 in this respect. Hirst said about 9/11 that it is 'kind of an artwork in its own right' as the terrorists achieved "something which nobody would ever have thought possible" (Allison, 2017).

impossible, a second is that creativity only must be good of its kind, and another rejects the value condition.

Creative Cannot Entail Destructive

One response argues that the inventive deeds of necrophiles and terrorists are destructive and therefore cannot be creative, since destructivity and creativity are mutually exclusive:

> Acts that are deliberately harmful or malicious are properly thought of as destructive. However, such acts can be extremely clever, even if deviously so. Where it is the case, then, that the value of a creative act was wholly intrinsic to it, the inherent cleverness of a malevolently harmful, hence destructive, action could render it creative. But this consequence (…) is strongly counter-intuitive, for it is a conceptual truth that creative and destructive acts exclude and need to be distinguished from one another in any theory of creativity. (Novitz, 2003, pp. 185-186, see also Novitz, 1999)

This conceptual-theoretical argument is highly contested (see e.g., Gaut, 2010, 2018; Grant 2012; Livingston, 2018) and I think for good reasons. It is simply unconvincing when looking at *actual* cases that are both destructive and creative. Being destructive *is* one of the major goals of the terrorist that he reaches by inventively destabilizing (parts of) society with acts that generate shared shock and despair. And think about some artworks that are meant to be both creative and destructive or harmful in a certain way. I agree that this response to dark creativity is untenable if we want to pursue a realistic philosophy of creativity that acknowledges the existence of different applications of creativity instead of simply rejecting some of them for terminological reasons.

Two other answers are offered in response to the problem of dark creativity, either by specifying the value condition so that cases of dark creativity would not fit under it or dropping the value condition and holding that creativity implies novelty but not valuable novelty.

Creativity is Conditionally Valuable

Gaut (2018) answered the problem of dark creativity by arguing that creativity is conditionally valuable. He distinguishes between instrumental, conditional, and final value.). Saying that creativity is 'useful' or 'effective' embodies the instrumental sense of understanding value. A common response in psychology to dark creativity is to interpret value in this rather narrow, instrumental sense. Remember how Cropley argues that 'there is also no doubt that the terrorist acts in question were highly successful' (2008, p. 108). I think it is indeed difficult to deny that the 9/11 hijackings were highly successful in terms of effectivity. However, one might reply that this is a too narrow definition of value and that creativity should produce some good that reaches further than effectiveness. Gaut proposes to accept that dark creativity can be 'good of its kind', but that this does not imply it is also valuable:

> The solution [to prevent the value condition of creativity being dropped because of the existence of *dark* creativity] is to distinguish between something's being *good* (or good period, or good simpliciter, as I will also put it) and something's being *good of its kind*. The creative theorist is a good terrorist, in the sense of being good as a terrorist, because he is good at terrorizing. But he isn't good, period The creative torture device is a good torture device, in the sense that it is good as a torture device, for it is a good thing to use in torturing. But it isn't good period. When we judge that a product is creative, we don't require that it is good period, but only that it is good of its kind. This being so, it does not follow that all instances of creativity are valuable, for creative products are only valuable of their kind, and the kind may be a bad one, such as terrorism or torture devices. (2018, p. 128)

Gaut believes creativity is 'conditionally valuable': creativity is valuable only 'when the kind of item produced is a valuable one: say, a medical device, rather than a torturer device' (2018, p. 129). His mixed use of 'good' and value' is somewhat confusing, but what Gaut seems to mean is that there exists clearly bad creativity that is, from a societal/moral point of view, not valuable at all. But at the same time, it might be good of its kind: in the context of a terrorist group, making inventive devices or hijacking plans contributes to

'good' (i.e., answering to the central goods of that context) terrorism. The main advantage of Gaut's response is that it allows us to distinguish between genuine creativity and original nonsense: creativity – even immoral creativity – is distinguishable because it is good of its kind. Yet, Gaut recognizes the morally problematic nature of immoral creativity by stressing that although such creativity is good of its kind, it is not necessarily valuable.

Creativity Does not Imply Value

Gaut's 'good of its kind' characterization of dark creativity still goes too far for some authors. Hills and Bird propose to reject the value condition of creativity altogether.[17]

Their objection to Gaut's response is that some immorally creative acts and products are not even good of its kind. They give two arguments. The first is that many cases of genuine creativity are not even valuable of its kind:

> A torturer may devise a new method of torment – a variation on the rack, let us say – but find that it is a failure. Perhaps it causes death too quickly, without enough suffering on the way. As a method of torture, it is no good. But it does not follow that no creativity was exercised in coming up with the idea (2018, p. 98)

[17] However, they distinguish other conditions and see creativity as 'the disposition or set of linked dispositions of an individual to have many ideas (*fertility*); which are novel (originality) and generated through use of the imagination (*imagination*); and to carry through these ideas to completion (*motivation*)' (2018, p. 95). I am rather positive about the second and third dispositions because I do think that imagination plays a crucial role in creativity and that creativity does indeed require the will to realize things (I say more about this in parts 2 and 3). I do not see, however, why having 'many ideas' is important to creativity (and the authors do not offer an explanation for this criterium). In their conclusion, they state that 'according to their view, minimal and substantial creativity would not be distinguished by the value of what is created, however, but by the number, originality and imaginativeness of the ideas produced' (Ibid.: 105). That we can distinguish substantial from minimal creativity is undoubted and is defended by others. But it is questionable that the *number* of ideas *would* count in this distinction. Quality goes above quantity in creativity, that is exactly why we label creative products as 'valuable'.

Another example they offer is the art of Arseny Avraamov, a Russian avant-garde composer (whose works included novel microtonal compositions, graphical sounds created by drawing on the sound track of a film, and the famous symphony of factory sirens' (2018, p. 99). In their opinion, it is unclear whether Avraamov's works are good of their kind and they think the evidence of posterity proves his work were a 'dead end' (2018, p. 99).

Their observation on the torture instrument seems convincing at first sight: a failed torture instrument seems not even valuable relative to the standards of torturing. Their second example is less convincing in that respect. 'Evidence of posterity' is not a very trustworthy indicator of creative value and judging art of the past through the lens of the present is a trustworthy route to aesthetic judgment neither. Historical sources that zoom in on the artistic context of that time contradict their analysis and describe Avraamov as a pioneer in microtonal ultra-chromatic music (Monoskop*,* 2023; Smirnov 2013).

Looking at it again, however, the example of the torturer seems not to convince either since Hills and Bird do not take into account the typical ups and downs that are part of the creative process and the intersubjective evaluation of creativity. They argue that many creative acts and products are worthless relative to the standards of the domain but also for the creators themselves. They observe that 'many creative individuals are often intensively dissatisfied with their works' and refer to artists such as Brahms, who burned many of his scores (2018, p. 99). However, the fact that artists throw away materials they are dissatisfied with does not mean they consider the creative activity worthless. Failure can be seen as an inescapable or even indispensable part of one's creative development. Failures that are part of a creative process might initially give rise to negative emotions such as self-doubt and misery but might later, after a good night's sleep or a discussion with peers, lead to perseverance and the urge to pursue one's goals. Of course, not every creator is always so self-conscious about the dynamics of a creative process. But very often, creators and spectators differ in their valuations; creators might consider ideas or actions worthless while they are esteemed in the eyes of others. Once creative ideas are communicated and creative actions are performed, the scope of

creativity exceeds the creator's point of view and, consequently, the associated value of these thoughts and acts is something that is determined intersubjectively.

The intersubjective basis of creative value has a consequence for dark creativity that might be unsettling: an individual terrorist (or a group of terrorists) might value the failed attempt to make a torture instrument as a useful step in developing better ones and becoming better terrorists. Evaluations differ. Some groups and individuals value things deemed irrelevant or morally unacceptable by the majority, such as necrophilia and terrorism. The creative acts that follow from these pursuits will be condemned by the majority of the public. Please do not get me wrong here. I am deeply convinced of the wrongness of torturing, and I hope most people are. I agree with Hills and Bird's second argument that creating 'ever more elaborate methods of torture' is not a good way to spend your time, however satisfying you find the work, and how effective the methods you devise' (2018, p. 100). I agree that terrorism is definitely not a good practice to engage in or a goal to be guided by. Terrorism, like other heinous practices such as genocide and rape, is utterly destructive and cannot do good to an individual or society. I understand the concern their resistance to considering creativity valuable comes from. Creativity does not take place in a vacuum but in societies governed by social, ethical, and political codes. If creativity is part of immoral practices we reproach from a moral-societal point of view, we should be able to take stances on this application of creativity. However, I don't think excluding value from the concept of creativity based on the existence of dark creativity is the way to go. In Part III (section. 13.4) I respond to Hill's and Bird's concern by focusing on the problematic lack of appreciative evaluation of others.

In the last two chapters of Part I, chapter 5 and 6, I will discuss another issue that is present in the above discussions on dark creativity. I believe the responses ultimately build on a presupposition I do not share, i.e., that if we want to talk meaningfully about creativity, we have to formulate a precise, strictly delineated definition of creativity to which individual instances of creativity must answer. The problem with Novitz's response to dark creativity is that it is unsensitive to clearly destructive instances of creativity. What I appreciate about Gaut's approach is that it is

sensitive to those instances. Gaut's response to the existence of dark creativity exists as an elucidation of his definition: creativity must be good of its kind and not good period. Hills and Bird make the opposite, radical choice to narrow down the definition of creativity by excluding the value condition. While I have more sympathy for Gaut's response I do not think philosophical reflection of creativity must formulate more precise but still general theoretical definitions of creativity to which individual cases of creativity must answer. In chapter 5 and 6, I want to propose a different approach: a phenomenological approach in which we no longer consider creativity in general and moral creativity in particular as a concept with one strictly delineated definition, but as an umbrella term that describes a heterogenous collection of phenomena.

5. Typically Innovative, Typically Valuable

My approach toward creativity in general and moral creativity in particular is inspired by Sophie Grace Chappell's approach toward epiphanies. Chappell does not search for a general definition of epiphany to which all concrete instances of epiphany must answer. She does name some typical aspects of epiphanies (see part III, section 13.1), but argues that epiphany is a focal-case concept[18]:

> There are clear and central cases of epiphanies (…) But there are also less clear and less central cases, which we might still want to call epiphanies: or there again, might not. Nothing much turns on where *exactly* we draw the boundaries of the proper use of the term 'epiphany'. The central territory of the concept is not threatened by minor demarcation disputes about its borders. There are certainly grey areas, and they certainly have their interest. There are equally certainly *non*-grey areas: for instance, the black ones and the white ones. (…) True, there are no non-stipulative necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being an epiphany, and the epiphanic fades out, around its edges, into relatively unexciting or small-scale phenomena like the merely striking or surprising moment. There are no non-stipulative necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being a mountain, either, and the category of the mountainous typically fades out around its edges into literally small-scale phenomena. That does not stop the geologist from studying mountains, nor the alpinist from climbing them. (2022, p. 9)

Chappell treats epiphany as a concept that refers to a wide range of different phenomena. She gives many examples of epiphanies in her book: religious revelations, individual realizations of value, sudden collective insights, and many other examples. Just like Chappell sees few advantages in a strict list of necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being an epiphany, I do not see many advantages in reducing a similarly broad notion as creativity to a strictly defined definition consisting of sufficient and necessary conditions to which concrete instances of creativity must answer. In chapter 3 I clarified there is a lot of variation concerning creativity's novelty. We use the

[18] She borrows this concept from Owen (1960).

term creativity to point at breakthrough during learning processes, for historically novel inventions, psychologically new ideas, professional realizations, innovative problem-solving, and so on (I am not trying to be comprehensive here; this list is open-ended). In chapter 4, I argued that the type of value varies between and within contexts and domains and that creative value is intersubjectively constituted.

To accommodate this variation, one could say that there are typical and atypical examples of creativity. One could say, for instance, that creativity is typically novel and valuable, and then specify which type of novelty and value we are dealing with in specific cases of creativity or how they deviate from typical cases. I think the typical-atypical distinction is in general a good distinction to use because it allows for variation in a general category. However, I think the distinction should not be used to distinguish between subcategories of creativity. One might argue for instance that dark creativity is an atypical example of creativity because it is not in line with creativity's typical value aspect. Other categories of creativity - such as moral creativity – are then considered typical examples of creativity. However, I think such a categorical distinction would be difficult to maintain. First, there are examples of atypical moral creativity as well. Second, the distinction between typical and atypical in such an example may itself be open to discussion. Take the following example:

Sunflowers vs. Soup

On October 13, 2022, activists from Just Stop Oil, a UK-based activist group that protests the country's further use of fossil fuel, threw tomato soup over Van Gogh's world-famous painting *Sunflowers* at the National Gallery in London:

> There were gasps, roars and a shout of "Oh my gosh!" in room 43 of the gallery as two young supporters of the climate protest group threw the liquid over the painting, which is protected by glass, just after 11am (…) "What is worth more, art or life?" said one of the activists, Phoebe Plummer, 21, from London. She was accompanied by 20-year-old Anna Holland, from Newcastle. "Is it worth more than food? More than justice? Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet

> and people? The protest sparked mixed reactions and plenty of anger. Sophie Wright, 43, from Surrey, initially condemned the action but changed her mind when she learned the painting was unlikely to have been permanently damaged. "I support the cause and by the looks of it they are considered protests, with a purpose of raising awareness and shocking [people]," she said. "So long as they don't hurt people or put people in danger, then I support them. "But a witness, who declined to give his name, said he could understand their cause but worried about targeting "a beautiful piece of art, which is the best of humanity". He added: "They may be trying to get people to think about the issues but all they end up doing is getting people really annoyed and angry. "The typical unthinking individual who doesn't think about the big issues of the planet is not the kind of person who walks around the National Gallery." Alienating people from their cause was a concern, said Alex De Koning, a Just Stop Oil spokesperson (…) "But this is not The X Factor," he added. "We are not trying to make friends here, we are trying to make change, and unfortunately this is the way that change happens." (Gale, 2022)

The value aspect of these creative acts is prone to discussion. The question 'What is worth more, art or life?' is too simple to frame the different opinions that people will hold about the value of these acts. While some will be very dismissive about targeting 'the best of humanity', others will have more mixed opinions, granting the effectiveness of the act as an activist strategy but pointing at the ineffectiveness of bringing direct change to policy, as it will probably not *directly* change the UK's fossil fuel policy. And others will praise this act as it successfully directs attention to fossil fuel use and its effects on climate change. Because of this discussion, we might call this example an atypical example of moral creativity; atypical because the way it realizes moral improvement is atypical. This is advantageous because by allowing instances of creativity to be atypical, we can include controversial or dubious examples in the category of moral creativity. However, I think we must be aware that this way of calling the example atypical can be challenged. The line of reasoning above considers this example of moral creativity to be atypical because of the dubious ways in which it brings moral improvement but one could argue that this is a very typical example of moral creativity concerning its innovative character. Innovation often comes with transgression: many examples of creativity - and I

see here no exception when it comes to moral creativity – are innovative in the sense that they transgress or at least challenge the standards, expectations, and common practices of the relevant context (see also Part III, section 14.3). In this case, it challenges the way one is supposed to undertake climate activism. While some might find this an atypical case of creativity because of its dubious way of being valuable, others will consider this a typical case because of its remarkable innovative qualities.

The main point I want to make here is that the distinction between typical and atypical can be at most a guideline in reflection on moral creativity that can be challenged by concrete examples of moral creativity, but that this should be no problem for this moral-philosophical research. My overall aim in this thesis is to make moral creativity visible to the reader as a significant moral phenomenon, not to formulate strictly delineated conceptual categories. When I introduce a description of moral creativity as typically concerning contextually innovative moral improvement, I hope this might serve as a tool to recognize moral creativity, but I realize it is preliminary, always open to be challenged by concrete examples as the one above. In this thesis, I am rather concerned with offering and relating several phenomenologically sound descriptions that reveal the significance of moral creativity to the reader. In the following chapter, the last chapter of part I, I will reflect a bit more on this aim and the methodology that comes with it.

6. A Phenomenological Approach to Moral Creativity

In *Epiphanies*, as well as in earlier work (see also Chappell, 2014, 2017) Chappell has advocated a phenomenology-based ethics, i.e., an ethics that works mainly with phenomenological arguments: descriptions of particular phenomena relevant to moral life. She applies this approach, among other topics, to epiphanies; epiphanies can be best understood by examining phenomenologically rich descriptions of epiphanies and thinking about what is happening. As philosophers, we can than abstract from those descriptions and try to highlight some typical aspects. But such lists are open-ended. Descriptions of complex and rich phenomena such as epiphanies and creativity will always give us new insights about those phenomena by revealing slightly different details. Such phenomenological descriptions work differently than arguments. Chappell clarifies that in contrast to arguments that succeed 'when they move by valid inferences from true premises to true conclusions', phenomenological descriptions succeed when they are:

(1) sincere: - when they are offered with a serious attempt at honesty, in good faith, and without conscious ideological bias;
(2) when they are accurate – when they capture what our experience is actually like;
(3) and when they are significant – when what they sincerely and accurately capture is existentially central. (2022, p. 115, numbering added)

I will approach moral creativity in a similar spirit Chappell approaches epiphanies: by considering examples that I think provide us with sincere, accurate, and significant insights about moral creativity. This is not a call *against* arguments. I will theorize and offer arguments in this thesis, e.g., that there is something like contextually innovative moral creativity (see above) or that imaginative apprehension is typically part of the morally creative process (see Part II). The point here is not that, ultimately, moral

philosophy must abandon argument or theory (how would that even work in a theoretical discipline?) but that there is another style of moral philosophy besides the style of the rigorous argument.[19] Chappell is not alone in this idea. Quassim Cassam recently argued that there are other philosophical virtues than the 'mathematical virtues of rigor, clarity and precision' (2023, p. 1). He gives the example of Charles Mills' discussion of the phenomenon of white ignorance (Mills, 2007):

> To the extent that a philosopher like Mills paints a compelling picture of something like white ignorance, it is not because he produces a rigorous argument from first principles. Instead he describes something that his readers—most of them, at any rate—will easily recognize as a genuine phenomenon, gives a plausible characterization of this phenomenon, relates it to other such phenomena (such as male ignorance), and offers an explanation of both the (structural) causes of white ignorance and its epistemological consequences. (…) To ask whether Mills's conclusions follow logically from his premises is to ask the wrong question. A picture, which is what Mills paints, is not the conclusion of an inference and is neither rigorous nor unrigorous. A more pertinent question is whether his account rings true. This is partly a question of whether things are as Mills represents them as being and whether it is plausible that white ignorance has the causes and effects that he posits. Although Mills's paper is not devoid of theory, it is not just an exercise in abstract theorizing. (Cassam 2023, p. 7)

[19] Chappell has argued elsewhere that *'pace* some critics (past and present) of my anti-theory agenda, the assertive side of my agenda implies no such absurdity as 'the substitution of non-rational epiphanies for rational argument'. Meanwhile on its concessive side, the agenda does allow that some situations can (and can usefully) be brought under some rule. The point is not to deny *that*, nor the wider claim that, for many decisions, there is some systematic-theoretical model that you can deploy to resolve them. What I deny is that there is some one unique systematic-theoretical model such that you can deploy it for all decisions. Not all situations fall under any rule, and of the situations that do fall under some rule, there is no one rule under which they all fall. That's all' (2023, p. 211). Chappell specifically refers to a book review of *Epiphanies* in the *Boston Review* (Fraser, 2023).

In terms of subject matter and the personal relation to the topic, Mills's treatment of white ignorance and my research of creativity are distinct, but (Cassam's reading of his) philosophical methodology seems to correspond to the methodology I pursue in my examination of moral creativity. In this thesis, I want to convince the reader of the moral significance of creativity. I aim to do so by offering and analyzing sincere, accurate, and significant phenomenological descriptions of morally creative products, processes and persons that display or go through these. My phenomenological analysis consists of highlighting certain aspects from those examples and linking several examples together so that something rings true to the reader.

This remains a philosophical work that is not devoid of theory. However, the theorizing does not aim to start and end at necessary or sufficient conditions along which examples of creativity should be understood. Chappell argues that 'by getting a grip on the phenomenal content of certain paradigm human experiences' [– e.g., epiphanies, or the experiences that are part of a creative process or the experience of white ignorance, etc. –] 'we get hold of a kind of first principle in ethical experience which is not a definition, but an icon - a picture. And this picture can serve, better than a definition ever could, as the source of a basic moral understanding on which we can build and from which we can extend into less basic forms of moral understanding' (2017, pp. 256-257). I think this method of doing moral philosophy is very much like the way we are having conversations about moral topics. In such conversations with friends, spouses, parents, and children, we try our best to get closer to the nature or meaning of a certain phenomenon, action, or opinion. During such conversations, even if they are about the meaning of a certain term, we often refer to the phenomenological contents of certain experiences to make a point. ('well, I think lying really concerns *this*, but not *that*, but maybe in *this* case it should not be considered lying'). According to Chappell, the phenomenological basis of our ethical understanding is one of the reasons why 'ethics is hard': 'because ethics is centrally about phenomenal contents, experience, and it's hard to talk about experience. Or most briefly of all: ethics is not a science, but a humanity' (2017, p. 261).

This first part of the thesis should be read not only as a positioning in the philosophical debate on creativity but as a first step in understanding moral creativity through five concrete examples - five images, one might say - of what moral creativity could look like. In the next section, I will continue to employ these examples (and several others) to focus on the ins and outs of morally creative processes.

Summary of Part I

I started this first part with five cases that exemplify the phenomenon of moral creativity. With these examples at hand, I gave a short sketch of the history of the concept of and reflection on creativity. I then discussed the recent philosophical discussions of creativity by successively focusing on two aspects often associated with creativity: novelty and value.

I discussed Boden's influential distinction between P- and H-creativity, that led to a common philosophical approach to creativity that considers fundamental novelty on a psychological level as a minimal condition of creativity. I then introduced two accounts of moral creativity that represent moral creativity in line with this common approach. However, I argued that Martin's example and my initial examples show moral creativity that does not fit well with this model based on fundamental novelty and invention. I examined distinctions between categories of creativity in the psychological literature to demonstrate that the type of moral creativity I discuss is instead about contextual innovation rather than fundamental novelty. With this characterization of contextual innovation, I argued that such moral creativity includes the spontaneous use of experience and knowledge, is primarily characterized by breakthroughs in the contextual sense of bringing improvement, the innovative character of which makes the moral creativity surprising relative to the standards and expectations of the given context.

I continued by considering the value aspect that is often attributed to creativity. I showed how creativity is associated with value at least since Kant's idea that we should be able to distinguish works of genius from original nonsense. I suggested we could hold a more pluralistic and democratic idea of creativity that considers creativity to be valuable in general, and that allows for variation qua type of value across different domains and contexts. Then I discussed a phenomenon that could problematize the idea that creativity is generally valuable; the existence of so-called dark creativity, where creativity is used in malevolent ways. I discussed three philosophical responses to dark creativity: conceptually excluding creativity from destructivity, arguing that creativity is conditionally valuable, and the position that creativity does not

imply value. I expanded on the underlying idea of these responses, i.e., if we want to talk meaningfully about creativity, there must be a list of necessary and sufficient conditions to which concrete cases can be compared. I problematized this underlying idea. I suggested that, at most, we can say that creativity is typically novel and typically valuable, and moral creativity is typically innovative and typically brings moral improvement, but that we should treat such characterization at most as a guideline in our reflection of moral creativity, that can be challenged by dubious or controversial examples. I concluded this first part by reflecting on the phenomenological methodology of my approach to moral creativity, in which the main goal is not to provide a set of sufficient or necessary conditions but to convince the reader of the significance of moral creativity through sincere, accurate, and significant phenomenologically rich descriptions of such creativity.

II. Moral Creativity and Moral Imagination

Where have I seen this before?
When will I feel it again?
Somebody opened a door
I'm afraid to walk in
Imagination will kill
If imagination stands still

dEUS, *Include Me Out*

7. The Role of Imagination in Creativity

Different philosophers have argued that imagination plays a constitutive role in creativity (see Audi, 2018; Gaut, 2003, 2009, 2010; Stokes, 2014, 2016, Hills & Bird, 2018). They consider imagination as the mental ability that underlies psychologically novel thought. This idea goes back to Kant, who considered the imagination a mental ability with different roles in cognition, aesthetic judgment, and genius. Kant distinguishes between a reproductive variant and a productive variant of imagination. The reproductive imagination 'brings back to mind an empirical intuition that it had previously' (Kant 2006, 7: 16, as cited. in Matherne, 2016, p. 56). Kant calls this variant of imagination reproductive because it merely brings earlier impressions back to mind, without adding something to those impressions. However, Kant argues that imagination fulfills other productive, roles. In his first *Critique*, he explains how productive imagination generates so-called 'schemata' that mediate between concepts and appearances. Schemata are for Kant 'basic outlines or gestalts we have in our minds that represent the relevant concept in sensible form' (Matherne, 2016, p. 60). For instance, a schema for 'chair' could be something like 3-*4 legs, made of plastic, wood, or metal, a surface to sit upon*. Without further going into the details of his schematism (that he also applies to a priori categories and mathematical concepts), the most important thing to

note here is that these products of the imagination – the schemata – need to fit with the concept in question. Consequently, this productive role of the imagination is limited to generating schemata that fit with the limitations of the concept in question. In his third *Critique*, Kant contrasts this productive role with another productive role of imagination in genius. Here, the imagination stands in a relation of free play with the understanding and its concepts:

> The mental powers, then, whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes genius, are imagination and understanding. Only in the use of imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept. (Kant, 2001, p. 194)

Kant thinks that the imagination is the element that explains how poets as Homer and Wieland were able to come up with their exceptional art that set a new standard for poetry. His idea is that imagination offers the necessary freedom to explore associations and ideas leading to great art.

While contemporary philosophers of creativity no longer think in romantic terms as genius and take a broader, democratic approach to creativity, many of them take over Kant's idea that imagination delivers the 'cognitive freedom important for creative thought and action' (Stokes, 2014, p. 157). According to Stokes, imagination fulfills what he calls the 'non-truth-bound cognitive manipulation role' in the development of such thought and action (2014, pp. 162-163). Stokes thus locates the free play of imagination in its relation to truth. Take Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait With Grey Hat*. Led by his imagination, he explored the use of contrasting colors and different techniques. Van Gogh was not interested in truth-seeking, representing reality or mimicking existing modes of depiction. Hence, the creativity of his *Self-Portrait* is no result of thought that tries to match reality, but of the imagination that freely manipulates mental content.

That imagination is non-truth bound does not mean it cannot be concerned with or conditioned by reality at all, but that it is not

necessarily so. In fact, while imagination can transcend reality, it is often directly engaged with reality. The imaginative play of the cook who wants to combine different leftovers is directed at the creation of a tasty dish and thus directly relates to materials that are involved (the leftovers, kitchen utensils, cooking herbs, etc.). This shows how imagination has an instructive use that 'enable[s] us to learn about the world as it is, as when we plan or make decisions or make predictions about the future' (Kind and Kung, 2016, p. 1). Its versatile cognitive manipulation can handle (the combination) of abstract ideas, phantasies, and real-world affairs. Even aesthetic imagination, often regarded as boundless and fantastical, is partly constrained by practical matters; painters and architects must mind the materials they work with. The creative imagination in the cases of moral creativity I discussed in part one is world- and context-related, e.g., life in the trenches, negotiation practices, the oppression of dictators, friendships, and the well-being of newcomers. The imaginative play here is neither free-floating nor noncommittal but directed at searching ways for contextual improvement.

Imagination is non-truth bound, but if it may fulfill a world-directed, instructive use like in moral creativity; it is focused on the possibilities and limits of a particular context. Therefore, some philosophers and psychologists have characterized creativity as a process of constrained stochasticity (see Carruthers, 2020; Simonton 2003), i.e., a process that generates variation within the confines of limitations. These limitations or constraints can be of a different nature, e.g.,

> the task demands, or (...) the goals of the agent. (…) ("Find a way to fix a candle to the wall using only a box of matches and a thumb-tack.") They can be more open-ended, as in tests of so-called 'divergent thinking'. ("Think of some unusual things you could do with a brick.") Or sometimes the only constraints derive from the medium of production itself. ("Devise a new style of painting.") But given the constraints, there is extensive evidence that the process of creation within those constraints is often stochastic, involving chance combinations of elements. (Carruthers, 2020, p. 4457)

In several other papers, Peter Carruthers has written on the constitutive role of imagination in creativity from an evolutionary

perspective (see Carruthers, 2002, 2007; Picciuto & Carruthers, 2014). His idea is that imagination's playfulness is at the basis of creative problem solving as the process of constrained stochasticity and pretend play and that pretend play caused the so-called 'creative explosion' of human intelligence bringing immense cultural, technological, and artistic changes for our species 40. 000 years ago (Carruthers, 2002).

Stokes, Simonton, and Carruthers study creativity from a cognitive science perspective. However, I think their general idea of creativity containing free play of the imagination between the confines of some constraints applies to moral creativity, where innovation is brought to a certain context by imagining ways of improvement in that context. In the case of moral creativity, I consider contextual particularities and not moral principles as the involved constraints. I think the role of imagination in moral creativity does not consist in the 'imaginative' application of theoretical principle to a particular reality but does primarily involve the imaginative exploration of and experimentation in a certain context (I will elaborate on this in the remaining chapters of part II). Note that I do not argue here for the exclusion of ethical principles. Certain ethical principles might have been part of the thought of the Christmas truce soldiers, but I do not think most of their imaginative work consisted in applying such notions to the situation.

Several authors who have defended the role of imagination in moral thought and action have in fact been very critical for the central place principle application takes in moral philosophy. Mark Johnson, for example, objects to what he calls the Moral Law theory that considers 'moral reasoning as consisting entirely of the bringing of concrete cases under moral laws or rules that specify "the right thing to do" in a given instance' (1993, p. 4). Johnson suggests that, instead, moral imagination lies at the basis of 'understanding (of self, others, institutions, cultures), for reflective criticisms, and for modest transformation, which together are the basis for moral growth' (199, p. 187). Accounts of moral imagination like Johnson's aim not only to describe the role of imagination in moral reasoning, but often go together with a critical evaluation of ethics as a philosophical discipline. Sophie Grace Chappell argues that ethics suffers from 'the curse of the definite article', i.e., the urge to reduce

moral thought and action to one ultimate principle (e.g., duty, utility) and so arrive at

> an approach to thinking about what to do which derives conclusions about what to do in particular cases from the most general possible principles about what to do in any case whatever, and which aspires to give the greatest possible number of explanations and justifications and action on the basis of the smallest possible number of theoretical posits, axioms and assumptions. (2017, p. 1)

Johnson regards the Moral Law (folk) theory as a very pervasive Western view of ethics that underlies 'both religious ethics and our dominant nontheological rationalist ethics [i.e., mainly Kantianism and Utilitarianism]' (1993, p. 4). Chappell associates the 'curse of the definite article' with systematic moral theory in general that can come in many forms.[20] Regardless of the fact whether their characterization rightly portrays their opponents or not, the positive point I take to heart is that moral life is more than the application of principles and that ethics as a discipline should reflect this richness of moral life. Johnson suggests that, instead, moral imagination lies at the basis of 'understanding (of self, others, institutions, cultures), for reflective criticisms, and for modest transformation, which together are the basis for moral growth' (1993, p. 187). Chappell, in her account, argues that what matters in good moral thinking (whether it concerns actual moral deliberation or in doing philosophical ethics that studies such deliberation); is that it flows with our imagination engaged (2017, p. 43).

Central to this thesis is a study of a moral phenomenon rather than a criticism of ethics as a philosophical discipline. In part II, I examine how imagination plays a role in such moral creativity. However, I believe that a consideration of moral imagination and moral creativity that tell us more about our moral lives will have consequences on how we think of ethics as a discipline. More about this in part III.

---

[20] 'The most familiar examples of systematic moral theory in this sense are the various forms of Kantianism, consequentialism, contractualism, natural law theory, and son on; virtue ethics can sometimes be presented as a systematic moral theory, too' (2014, p. 1).

In the following chapters I will discuss two ways in which imagination is part of moral creativity. I thereby build on two pioneering models of moral imagination. The first is Iris Murdoch's model of moral imagination as the imaginative apprehension of reality, the second is John Dewey's model of moral imagination as the imaginative reconstruction of action. Murdoch and Dewey are two philosophers working in very different paradigms, but I believe their moral-philosophical work shows two ways in which the imagination is active in the morally creative process.

8. Iris Murdoch and the Imaginative Apprehension of Reality

Of course virtue is good habit and dutiful action. But the background condition of such habit and such action, in human beings, is a just mode of vision and a good quality of consciousness. It is a task to come to see the world as it is.

Murdoch, 2001, p. 89

An important part of human learning is an ability both to generate and to judge and understand the imagery which helps us to interpret the world.

Murdoch, 1992, p. 215

8.1. Inner Moral Activity

Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) was an Irish-British philosopher and novelist. In her philosophical work, she introduces a moral metaphysics and moral psychology by which she aims to go against the popular Anglo-American and continental ethical theories of her time.

In *The Sovereignty of Good*, one of her major philosophical works, Murdoch opposes a pervasive picture of morality and moral agents she traces back in contemporaries that she finds deeply problematic. She considers this picture to be

1. 'behaviourist in its connection of the meaning and being of action with the publicly observable',
2. 'existentialist in its elimination of the substantial self and its emphasis on the solitary omnipotent will', and
3. 'utilitarian in its assumption that morality is and can only be concerned with public acts'. (2001, p. 9)

Murdoch was deeply dissatisfied with these tendencies that she traces back in several ethical theories. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, she paraphrases Stuart Hampshire's intentionalism, which she finds an example of an overemphasis on overt, will-driven acts:

> Thought and intention must be directed towards definitive overt issues or else they are merely daydream. (…) What is 'inward', what lies in between overt actions, is either impersonal thought, or 'shadows' of acts, or else substanceless dream. Mental life is, and logically must be, a shadow of life in public. Our personal being is the movement of our overtly choosing will. (…) 'I identify myself with my will'. (2001, pp. 7-8)

Murdoch accuses such conceptions, with their scientific dedication to public language, overt acts, and the will of degrading our mental world as 'inevitably parasitic upon the outer world' and limiting the scope of morality to will-driven, publicly observable action (2001, p. 5). Hampshire was a student of A.J. Ayer, whose logical positivism holds that only analytic and empirically verifiable, factual statements can have meaning. This theory regards evaluative statements (e.g., 'rape is wrong') as mere expressions of feelings that are in no possible way a representation of a set of facts and thus meaningless. At the same time, Murdoch was very critical of Sartre's existentialism, that notoriously claims that human beings are *condemned to be free* According to existentialism, moral choices are not backed by a knowledge of a certain moral reality but stem from a will that chooses his own values and acts against the background of an absurd world. According to Murdoch, Sartre's existentialism shares the same overemphasis on the will and overt acts as Hampshire's intentionalism: what rests of morality is the will to act and the overt acts that follow from this will.

Murdoch presents another picture of man and morality that opposes the existentialist hero choosing his own values and the Anglo-American theories stemming from logical positivism that consider evaluative statements as nonsense or as the expression of feelings or prescriptions.[21] She is convinced that our moral lives stretch beyond the publicly observable and that we can acquire a specific type of moral knowledge that reflects moral reality. According to Murdoch, people obtain such moral knowledge not by empirically verifying facts, but by an inner activity, by perfecting one's perception of the world. Let's consider Murdoch's most

[21] R. M. Hare viewed evaluative statements not as fact-stating speech, but as moral prescriptions ('rape is wrong' should be understood as 'thou shalt not rape').

important example (and probably the most famous passage of her philosophical oeuvre) of such inner activity: her example of M and D, that is central to 'The Idea of Perfection', the first essay of *The Sovereignty of Good*.

8.2. M and D

In 'The idea of Perfection', Murdoch tells the story of M and D; a mother-in-law M who comes to see her daughter-in-law D in another light. It consists of two parts. In the first part

> M finds D quite a good-hearted girl, but while not exactly common yet certainly unpolished and lacking in dignity and refinement. D is inclined to be pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile. M does not like D's accent or the way D dresses. M feels that her son has married beneath him. Let us assume for purposes of the example that the mother, who is a very 'correct' person, behaves beautifully to the girl throughout, not allowing her real opinion to appear in any way. We might underline this aspect of the example by supposing that the young couple have emigrated or that D is now dead: the point being to ensure that whatever is in question as *happening* happens entirely in M's mind. Thus much for M's first thoughts about D. (2001, pp. 16-17)

Later, Murdoch completes the story as follows:

> Time passes, and it could be that M settles down with a hardened sense of grievance and a fixed picture of D, imprisoned (if I may use a question-begging word) by the cliché: my poor son has married a silly vulgar girl. However, the M of the example is an intelligent and well-intentioned person, capable of self-criticism, capable of giving careful and just attention to an object which confronts her. M tells herself: 'I am old-fashioned and conventional. I may be prejudiced and narrow-minded. I may be snobbish. I am certainly jealous. Let me look again.' Here I assume that M observes D or at least reflects deliberately about D, until gradually her vision of D alters. If we take D to be now absent or dead this can make it clear that the change is not in D's behaviour but in M's mind. D is discovered to be not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not

> tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on. (2001, p. 17).

Murdoch focuses on the significant change of perception M goes through. First, M perceives her daughter-in-law D as 'certainly unpolished and lacking in dignity and refinement. (…) inclined to be pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile'. In the second part, she perceives M not as 'vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on.' Murdoch argues that M's change of perception is not something that just *happens to her* but that this change of perception results from a specific type of moral activity: M 'has been *doing* something, something which we approve of, something which is somehow worth doing in itself. M has been morally active in the interim' (2001, p. 19). However, Murdoch stresses that M's activity cannot be understood in terms of overt action, by saying that M 'behaves beautiful to the girl throughout, not allowing her real opinion to appear in any way' (2001, p. 17) and by suggesting that M's activity could have occurred in cases where D would have emigrated or deceased: the change M goes through is an inner change, happening entirely in M's mind. M's moral activity, Murdoch suggests, is highly morally relevant, but cannot be described in terms of overt action. Instead, she describes M's activity in terms of *attention* and *love*.

In the next sections I will argue that Murdoch's idea of attention should be understood as the imaginative apprehension of concrete objects of moral reality, i.e., other persons, events, and situations. Let's first unpack her idea of attention and love before we turn to her theory of imaginative apprehension.

8.3. Loving Attention

Murdoch explains M's activity first in terms of attention. She derives her idea of what such attention entails from Simone Weil's definition of attention. Weil converted to Catholicism in the later part of her life and regarded prayer as the highest form of attention: a pure, total, self-effacing focus on the transcendental nature of God, not disturbed by other matters. However, Weil argues that

attention reaches further than religious devotion, as she claims that all 'the authentic and pure values – truth, beauty and goodness – in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object' (2002, p. 120). She argues that, as full attention is totally focused to the object of attention, full attention is necessarily self-deflating: 'the soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth' (1992, p. 115). Attention here is a self-effacing, virtuous attitude that shows in our relationship with different objects of experience; works of art, other people, and transcendent objects. Murdoch takes over this idea of attention as a virtuous attitude that one should take towards 'things other than oneself,' and regards it as 'the characteristic and the proper mark of the moral agent' (2001, p. 33).

Murdoch argues that M's change of vision results from such attention: she comes to see D in another light after redirecting her focus to D's particular individuality and situation, on who D *really* is. M further describes her attention as 'a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality' (2001, p. 33). For Murdoch, the terms 'just' and 'loving' both refer to the outward-looking nature of attention. M's vision of D is 'just' as it does justice to her individuality and situation, and Murdoch's use of 'loving' should be understood along the same line. She holds a particular idea of love as a mode of selfless knowledge of things other than oneself: 'Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality' (1999, p. 215). In the case of M and D, M's loving gaze is directed at another person. However, Murdoch deliberately uses 'something other than oneself' in a broader sense that goes beyond romantic or brotherly love but that applies to all particular objects of reality. Murdoch suggested for example we find 'self-forgetful pleasure in the sheer alien pointless independent existence of animals, birds, stones, and trees' (2001, p. 83) When I refer to Murdoch's idea of attention, I will use it in this broad sense; a just and loving focus that can be directed at persons, situations, and events, and other creatures and objects we encounter.

Like Simone Weil, Murdoch describes attention as an orientation towards the world, away from the self. Such outward-reaching attention is characteristic of the virtuous person, who

attempts 'to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is' (2001, p. 93). Murdoch celebrates such attention throughout her work, but she simultaneously warns about the difficulty of piercing the veil spun by 'the fat relentless ego' (2001, p. 51). Murdoch is convinced that human beings are naturally selfish, driven by their own desires and wishes. She regards egocentricity as a deep-seated tendency of the human psyche that results in biased, distorted views of reality. It is this self-centeredness, in Murdoch's analysis, that prevents us from seeing things as they are. The first part of M and D's story shows such attention-disturbing self-centeredness. M misperceives D as being too juvenile and rude to be a good match for her son and the family. M can only revise her perception of D after coming loose from her prejudices and jealousy.

With her story of M and D, Murdoch wants to draw attention to the inner unselfing activity of attention by which we can understand the world around us. Emphasizing the moral importance of this activity, she wants to distinguish herself from contemporaries who narrow moral activity down to overt actions and reduce knowledge to statements of facts. Murdoch argues the story of M and D shows an inner activity that leads to moral knowledge. In the next sections, I explain how Murdoch further explains such attention in terms of perception and imagination.

8.4. Murdochian Moral Perception

Murdoch frames the story of M and D in visual terms:

> is not the metaphor of vision almost irresistibly suggested to anyone who, without philosophical prejudice, wishes to describe the situation? Is it not the natural metaphor? M *looks* at D, she attends to D, she focuses her attention. (2001, p. 22)

For Murdoch, perception is a moral activity that provides us with knowledge of the world around us. One could understand her theory of loving attention as a theory of moral perception. However, a Murdochian idea of moral perception significantly differs from how 'moral perception' is commonly understood today. Philosophers that have defended a view of moral perception mostly explain moral perception as the registration of 'moral properties';

they argue that we are able to *see* moral properties as 'wrongness' or 'goodness', just as we can see other features (properties) of reality such as colors and shapes (see, e.g., Audi, 2013; Cowan, 2015; Cullison, 2010; Hutton, 2022; McBrayer, 2010; McGrath, 2004; Werner, 2020a, 2020b). The most popular example of moral perception literature is Gilbert Harman's 'burning cat' example:

> Jim rounds a corner and sees a group of young hoodlums pour gasoline on a cat and ignite it. Jim makes the spontaneous judgment "What the children are doing is wrong." (Harman, 1977, p. 4, as cited in McGrath, 2004, p.210)

Defenders of moral perception use such examples to defend a perceptual-experiential theory of moral knowledge: Jim knows it is wrong by perceiving the wrongness of igniting a cat. The central hypothesis of moral perception theories, broadly speaking, is thus that Jim knows this action is wrong 'in a manner that is not reducible to rational intuition, inference, or conceptual competence' (Hutton, 2022, p. 571).

However, Murdoch's theory of moral perception differs from this idea of moral perception. Murdochian moral perception is not the registration of well-delineated moral properties as 'wrongness' but, as I will show in the coming sections, a process of imaginatively apprehending persons, situations, and events.

8.5. Murdoch's Visual Metaphor

Murdoch was not always consequent in her use of concepts. She interchangeably speaks of 'seeing', 'looking', 'attention', and 'vision'. Compare for example the three succeeding quotes of the *Sovereignty of Good*:

> Is not the metaphor of vision almost irresistibly suggested to anyone who, without philosophical prejudice, wishes to describe the situation? Is it not the natural metaphor? M *looks* at D, she attends to D, she focuses her attention. (2001, p. 22)

> I can only choose within the world I can see, in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort. (2001, pp. 35-36)

> I would like on the whole to use the word 'attention' as a good word and use some more general term like 'looking' as the neutral word. (2001, p. 37)

Laurence Blum has argued that Murdoch's inconsistent use of these visual concepts is confusing and problematic, as there seems no clear difference between (a) 'the (epistemologically and morally) neutral manner in which a situation presents itself', (b) 'attempts at focusing' and (c) 'morally successful focusing' (2012, p. 310). In the first quote, 'looks', 'attends', and 'focuses' seem to be used as synonyms that could both refer to (b) and (c). In the second quote, 'see' seems to be successful attention (c), which is called 'attention' in the third quote.

Blum rightfully points to terminological inconsistency: Murdoch seems to mix different connotations. Perhaps we should better distinguish between these different terms. Blum suggests, for example, that (a) is about 'looking' and not 'seeing', because 'see' is a success term' (2012, p. 310). But is 'seeing' then (b) or (c)? Is seeing epistemologically successful (seeing a certain object) and not moral? And what would be the exact term for (c)? Attention? Loving attention? I think, however, that an analytical approach of making strict divisions between (a), (b), and (c) would not be less confusing and would not offer a better understanding of the complex phenomenon Murdoch aims to describe. I think that if we want to understand Murdoch's perceptual theory, we must keep in mind Murdoch was not after sharply distinguishing different concepts for different cognitive activities in order to arrive at different stages of morally successful perception. Instead, she describes moral perception as an open-ended process of apprehending and re-apprehending reality. For Murdoch, this process is never complete: to understand reality, we must keep looking and looking. In such a conception of moral perception as a constantly ongoing process, there are no strict divisions between different stages of perception.

Again, Murdoch's idea of moral perception differs from contemporary accounts of moral perception. 'Moral perception' usually refers to the registration of evaluative properties of the world. In this case, 'moral' represents certain features, 'properties' of reality. The term 'perception' then stands for sense-perception that registers those properties. In Murdoch's framework, however,

'moral' stands for a moral reality and 'perception' for an explorative apprehension of reality. According to Evgenia Mylonaki, the perception Murdoch is talking about here is best understood by the way we look at art:

> The kind of sensibility that looking is meant to point us to is not the sensibility of the five senses but the aesthetic character of the contemplative mood: the mood involved in looking at a work of art, in looking at the sunset, at what is happening, what someone is doing, etc. There is a sense in which to look at either of these things is to entertain something on a contemplative register: I don't just see a marker move on a surface, I am looking at you writing on the board. I don't merely see a canvass with some paint on, I am looking at a work of art, and so on and so forth. Similarly, when I am turning towards an individual reality, say the individual reality of another human being, I do not merely see things happen to or done by an agent; I am contemplating their being. "Let me look again" M of the example says as she is turning her attention to the individual reality of D. By which she obviously does not mean, "Let me see what it is she says or does," but "Let me contemplate D." (Mylonaki, 2019, p. 594)

The comparison with art is not incidental. Murdoch saw a close relation between (our perception of) art and morality. She regards art as 'a completely adequate entry into (and not just analogy of) the good life, since it is the checking of selfishness in the interest of seeing the real' (2001, p. 63). When we look at art, a 'contemplative mood' – to use Mylonaki's term – is indeed part of our experience, just like our perception of others results from more than sense-perception. Murdoch uses a broad concept of perception, by which she aims to reflect the common ways in which we tend to think about reality and knowledge of reality. The concept I will use in this thesis is 'apprehension'. This is not a central term in her work, although she mentions it a few times (see 2001, p. 41). But I think this term covers what Murdoch means by her perceptual metaphor. Let's turn back to Murdoch's idea of metaphor before I give more details on imaginative apprehension.

To Murdoch, the 'metaphor of vision' is the 'natural metaphor' that people 'without philosophical prejudice' would use to describe the acquisition of moral knowledge (2011, p. 22). Murdoch deliberately speaks of a *metaphor*, but this does not make

her use of 'vision' a literary vehicle that must make another abstract idea understandable. Murdoch is convinced metaphors are not 'merely peripheral decorations or even useful models', but considers them as 'fundamental forms of our awareness of our condition; metaphors of space, metaphors of movement, metaphors of vision (...) it seems to me impossible to discuss certain kinds of concept without retort to metaphor, since the concepts are themselves deeply metaphorical and cannot be analysed into non-metaphorical components without a loss of substance' (2001, p. 75).

Murdoch's statement that metaphors are 'fundamental forms of our awareness of our condition' should be understood in a twofold way. First, this refers to philosophical reflection. Murdoch considers metaphors pervasive in philosophical views and Murdoch's aim is to counterbalance the metaphor of movement (will, action, agency) by that of vision (attention, love, reality). With her metaphors of vision, she aims to present something Hilary Putnam called a moral image:

> A moral image (...) is not a declaration that this or that is a virtue, or that this or that is what one ought to do; it is rather a picture of how our virtues and ideals hang together with one another and of what they have to do with the position we are in. It may be as vague as the notions of 'sisterhood and brotherhood'; indeed, millions of human beings have found in those metaphors moral images that could organize their moral lives - and this notwithstanding the enormous problem of interpreting them and of deciding what it could possibly mean to make them effective. Now moral philosophers generally prefer to talk about virtues or about (specific) duties, rights, and so on, rather than about moral images of the world. There are obvious reasons for doing this; nevertheless I think it is a mistake (…). What we require in moral philosophy is, first and foremost, a moral image of the world, or rather (…) a number of complementary moral images of the world. (Putnam, 1987, pp. 51-52, as cited in Alexander, 1993, p. 377)

When Murdoch juxtaposes the metaphor of vision with the metaphor of movement, she is referring to these kinds of deep images Putnam hints at. Philosophers might have a desire for abstract languages that is free of images and metaphors but ultimately, this seems to be impossible.

In addition to Murdoch's idea that metaphors form the basis of philosophical thought, she thinks that metaphors – and other imaginative structures – are part of our perception and knowledge. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Murdoch observes that 'our moral consciousness is full of (...) imagery, inaesthetic, visual, literary, traditional, verbal and non-verbal, and is full too of images of darkness, of stumbling, failing, sinking, drowning' (1992, p. 336). Once again, Murdoch does not use 'vision' as a literary means to describe something else but refers to actual perceptual experience. The example of M and D shows a mother that wants to understand who her daughter-in-law is by looking again at her. Murdoch thinks that such perceptual experience involves the use of imagination.

8.6. Imagination and Fantasy

> Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself, and then comes to resemble the picture.
>
> Murdoch, 1999, p. 75

Murdoch argued that 'clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort' (2001, pp. 35-36). She regards imagination as *the* means by and through which we can turn our egocentric views of reality into loving vision. Discussion on the nature and function of imagination are rather sparse in *The Sovereignty of Good*. However, the seventh chapter of her later work *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is dedicated to imagination. In this chapter, Murdoch criticizes Kant for limiting the spontaneous, free use of the imagination to the aesthetic domain:

> He distinguishes the empirical imagination, which spontaneously yet 'mechanically' prepares a sensuous manifold for subjection to the synthetic a priori and empirical concepts of the understanding, but which is not independently creative or aesthetically sensible, from the aesthetic imagination which is spontaneous and free and able to create a 'second nature'. But are 'fine art' and 'genius' as described by Kant really such a small corner of human faculty and experience? The concept of genius itself emerges from an

> appreciation of deep and omnipresent operation of imagination in human life. (1992, p. 316)[22]

Murdoch objects to Kant's distinction between what she calls a 'mechanic' associative imagination on a cognitive level and the free spontaneous imagination of Genius. She also rejects what she calls the romantic 'exalted' view (which she ascribes to Coleridge). Without further ado, she informs us that 'into this morass or dark forest I do not propose to enter but will follow Virgil's advice to Dante, *non ragioniam di lior, ma guarda e passe*. (Don't let's talk about them, just look and pass by)' (1992, p. 317). Murdoch supports the Romantic thinkers' (e.g., Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley) estimation of art over science. However, she is critical of their tendency to glorify to the power of the imagination and their absolute trust in poets as 'legislators of the world' (Shelley 1948, p. 109) (For more about Murdoch's relation with the romantics, see Altorf, 2008, pp. 81-83). As an alternative to Kant's limited view and the Romantic uncritical view, Murdoch presents a view of the imagination as a power omnipresent in human life that can both help and prevent us from coming to see reality as it is. She turns to Plato to distinguish these two tendencies of imagination.

Plato was wary of the imagination (*phantasia*). He regarded images as lower forms of knowledge that distract from higher and truer knowledge of the forms. This is why he was critical of and in The Republic unmistakably intolerant for the arts; artists should be banned from the ideal state because they obscure true knowledge through inferior imitations (images) of truth. However, Plato, was aware that some types of imitations were closer to the truth than others. He deemed the painter for instance inferior to the carpenter who understands mathematics. Murdoch suggests that Plato also held a more nuanced opinion about differences within the creative arts as he 'did not fail to appreciate the creative power of Homer, and the tragedians and other poets, whose work he admired and (I

[22] Altorf argues that Murdoch offers a limited or even 'idiosyncratic' presentation of Kant's theory of the imagination, as she did not fully recognize all the epistemological functions Kant attributed to the imagination (such as recognizing objects-as-such and individual objects through time) (2004, pp. 91-93). However, Murdoch's major point of criticism, that the free and spontaneous use of the imagination should not be limited to the aesthetic genius, is mirrored in contemporary accounts of creativity.

suspect) envied' (1992, p. 317). Murdoch suggests Plato was rather 'concerned about the results of (some) art; and is using the artist as an exemplar or metaphor. The poet as seer or madman is a dangerous figure' (1992, p. 217.). Murdoch finds in Plato a distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' imaginings and explains his idea of moral improvement accordingly as the 'progressive destruction of false images' (1992, p. 217) where illusionary imagery is replaced by higher forms 'attempting to express and embody what is perfectly good' (320). Murdoch applies the Platonic distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' type of imaginings to distinguish between imagination and fantasy:

> We need (…) two words for two concepts: a distinction between egoistic *fantasy* and liberated truth-seeking creative *imagination* (…)I want to see the contrast (…) in terms of two active faculties, one somewhat mechanically generating narrowly banal false pictures (the ego as all-powerful), and the other freely and creatively exploring the world, moving toward the expression and elucidation (and in art celebration) of what is true and deep. (1992, p. 321)

This contrast is crucial to understanding Murdoch's philosophy. The contrast between fantasy and imagination mirrors the contrast between seeing the world through the 'veil of selfish consciousness' and 'join the world as it really is' (Murdoch, 2001, p. 91). For Murdoch, selfishness means being locked into the self, not being able to destruct the images generated by one's wishes and desires, which Murdoch characterizes as fantasy. The imagination, in contrast, focuses on the exploration of reality. The contrast between imagination and fantasy might sound confusing and somewhat artificial as we tend to treat them as synonyms. However, Murdoch uses this distinction to avoid both an undervaluation and an overvaluation of imagination. According to her, imagination can both help and prevent us from seeing the world as it is. Although she speaks in this quotation of two *faculties*, I believe we should not regard fantasy and imagination as two different cognitive functions but as two tendencies of imaginative apprehension. According to Murdoch, imagination is deeply embedded in our apprehension of the world, which can be fantastical (egocentric) or imaginative (reality-directed).

I'll return to her fantasy concept in more detail later in this chapter (see 9.6.). Let us unpack first what Murdoch means by a 'liberated truth-seeking creative imagination'.

8.7. Imaginative Apprehension

According to Murdoch, imagination explores reality. In *The Darkness of Practical Reasoning*, Murdoch explains such imaginative exploration by contrast with 'strict' or 'scientific thinking' as 'a type of reflection on people, events, etc., which builds detail, adds colour, conjures up possibilities in ways which go beyond what could be said to be strictly factual' (1966, p. 48). Murdoch considers our apprehension of reality not as a dry agglomeration of facts that reflect a scientifically verifiable reality. Rather she thinks such apprehension happens through complex configurations of images, metaphors, and connotations: 'The world which we confront is not just a world of "facts" but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked' (1966, p. 49). And we improve such apprehension, she argues in a Platonic spirit, by reshaping and sometimes replacing those images to get closer to the particularity of what we are looking at. For Murdoch, getting a better grasp of moral reality does not entail abstracting away to arrive at some facts (or properties) but deepening and improving one's imaginative apprehension to arrive at a better perception of reality. In *The Sovereignty of Good,* Murdoch regards M's vision of D as a result of 'moral imagination and moral effort' (2001, pp. 35-36). However, she does not elaborate much on how exactly the explorative imagination works in this example. Let us consider another example to further disclose the process of imaginative apprehension.

I think Martha Nussbaum has offered a more detailed example and explanation of what Murdoch meant by imaginative exploration. In an article where she compares the artistic imagination with moral imagination, she discusses the relation between Adam Verver and his daughter Maggie Verver, two protagonists of Henry James' *The Golden Bowl*. Nussbaum focuses on a scene where Maggie is planning to leave the parental house and

marry her to-be husband Amerigo.[23] In line with Murdoch's idea of moral perception as imaginative apprehension, Nussbaum argues that Adam is only able to accept Maggie's decision by imaginatively apprehending her as

> a creature consciously floating and shining in a warm summer sea, some element of dazzling sapphire and silver, a creature cradled upon depths, buoyant among dangers, in which fear or folly, or sinking otherwise than in play, was impossible - something of all this might have been making once more present to him, with his discreet, his half shy assent to it, her probable enjoyment of a rapture that he, in his day, had presumably convinced no great number of persons either of his giving or of his receiving. He sat awhile as if he knew himself hushed, almost admonished, and not for the first time; yet it was an effect that might have brought before him rather what she had gained than what he had missed. (James, 1966, p. 476, as cited in Nussbaum 1985, p. 519)

In this scene, we can see how Adam Verver needs his imagination to grasp why he should let Maggie go. By picturing his daughter in an innovative way – as a 'creature consciously floating and shining in a warm summer sea…' - he realizes her decision to leave him is in line with who she is. Adam's elaborate imaginative apprehension, Nussbaum suggests, is a moral achievement that resembles a work of art, as it is

> subtle and high, rather than simple and coarse; precise rather than gross; richly colored rather than monochromatic; exuberant rather than reluctant, generous rather than stingy, suffused with loving emotion rather than mired in depression. To this moral assessment the full specificity of the image is relevant. If we had read, "He thought of her as an autonomous being" or "He acknowledged his daughter's mature sexuality," or even "He thought of his daughter as a sea creature dipping in the sea," we would miss the sense of

[23] *The Golden Bowl* has four main characters: Maggie Verver, Adam Verver, Prince Amerigo and Charlotte. Maggie and Amerigo fall in love and get married. Maggie proposes her father to marry Charlotte, an old friend of hers and to live with them in England. But Maggie does not know Charlotte was a former mistress of Amerigo. While spending much (too much?) time on their father-daughter relationship, Charlotte and Amerigo find each other and commit an affair. Maggie finds out and convinces her father to move to the USA with Charlotte.

> lucidity, expressive feeling, and generous lyricism that so moves us here. (1985, p. 521)

The example of Adam illustrates the exploring role of imagination in the process of apprehending the individuality and reality of other persons, situations, and events. Imagining his daughter in this particular way, Nussbaum argues, 'is, precisely, to know her, to know their situation, not to miss anything in it - to be, in short, "a person on whom nothing is lost"' (1985, p. 521).[24] In line with Murdoch's perceptual account of moral knowledge, Nussbaum concludes that moral knowledge, i.e., the concrete knowledge of persons, situations and events, 'is not simply intellectual grasp of propositions; it is not even simply intellectual grasp of particular facts; it is perception. It is seeing a complex concrete reality in a highly lucid and richly responsive way; it is taking in what is there, with imagination and feeling' (1985, p. 521).[25]

Nussbaum's analysis follows Murdoch's idea of moral perception as imaginative apprehension and re-apprehension of reality. First, Nussbaum stands with Murdoch's idea that these 'picturings, describings, feelings, and communications [are] actions in their own right [that] have a moral value that is not reducible to that of the overt acts they engender' (Nussbaum, 1985, p. 522).

Second, Nussbaum's analysis of the example compares to Murdoch's idea that imagination is not merely superfluous, aesthetic interpretation of a set of facts but that we encounter a 'world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked' (1966, p. 49). There is no 'neutral' moral perception by which we see the world that we 'enrich' with the imagination; our perception of what surrounds us is already mediated by imagination. Nussbaum articulates this idea by recalling that Adam 'used to see Maggie (and wish her to be) 'like some slight, slim draped 'antique' of Vatican or Capitoline hills, late and refined, rare as a note and immortal as a link, (…) keeping still the quality, the perfect felicity of the statue' (1985, pp. 153-154). Adam's imaginative apprehension is, like D's apprehension, a matter of re-envisioning his daughter. The former image of his daughter, which Murdoch would call egocentric and

---

[24] Nussbaum borrows this expression from *The Princess Casamassima*, another Henry James novel (James, 1977, p. 133).

[25] With 'feeling', she seems to refer to sensitivity rather than to actual emotions.

fantastical, prevents Adam from seeing her as an independent free woman but presents her as a fragile and unspoiled girl under his supervision and protection. Only by replacing this former image by another one he succeeds in seeing her as a woman who charts her own path.

Third, Nussbaum, like Murdoch, argues for the importance of particularity and specificity over generality and abstraction in moral philosophy. Nussbaum argues that imaginative apprehensions, in all their rich specificity, lucidity, and detail, are more crucial to concrete moral knowledge than what she calls 'the standing terms' of moral discourse. This is an expression she takes from James (1966, pp. 16-17) by which she refers to more general terms that are more common to moral philosophy. She names 'mutual sacrifice' (1985, p. 524) but in the context of her example of a daughter leaving her father, we could think of other concepts like 'independence' or 'freedom'. Nussbaum is not against the use of such terms in moral philosophy but argues that such terms can never convey the same richness and specificity as Adam's imaginative apprehensions.

At this point of the comparison between Murdoch and Nussbaum, one might pause and object that there is one major difference between the story of M and D on the one hand and the story of Adam and Maggie on the other hand when it comes to the role of such 'standing terms.' Unlike Adam's artful apprehension of Maggie, Murdoch describes M's change of perception as replacing one set of concepts with another. Recall how Murdoch describes M's first apprehension of D's personality as someone who is 'not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on' (2001, p. 17).[26] M's apprehension of D, as Murdoch describes it, seems to consist of what Nusbaum calls standing terms – rather general concepts – that don't convey the same richness as Adam's literary apprehensions. However, it is important to consider Murdoch's particular view of concepts. She regards concepts as imaginative structures that figure in our apprehensions of the world.

[26] And before she takes another look at M, she sees herself as 'old-fashioned and conventional' (…) 'prejudiced and narrowminded' (…) snobbish' and jealous' (2001, p. 17).

8.8. Concepts in Imaginative Apprehension

Murdoch is known for her discussion of the type of concepts she calls 'normative-descriptive words' (2001, p. 31) that possess descriptive and evaluative content. These are the kinds of concepts that figure in M's apprehension of D. Bernard Williams, who was directly inspired by Murdoch, later defined this type of concepts as 'thick' concepts that stand in contrast to 'thin' concepts as 'good', 'right', or 'ought' (Williams, 1985). In her defense of a Murdochian account of moral perception, Silvia Panizza explains how Murdoch's idea of moral perception is 'inherently conceptual' in the sense that concepts are inseparable from our perception of reality (2020, p. 277). Panizza explains that according to Murdoch, 'the world does not brutally present itself to us as non-conceptualized sense-data, but through an evaluative concept-using activity' (2020, p. 281). Murdoch regarded concepts as 'deep moral configurations of the world, rather than as lines drawn around separable factual areas' (Murdoch, 1999, p. 95, as cited in Panizza, 2020, p. 279). The content of these moral configurations depends both on the users of those concepts and on the world: 'if M says D is 'common' (…) this use of it can only be fully understood if we know not only D but M' (Murdoch, 2001, p. 32).

Recall that Murdoch considers concepts to be 'deeply metaphorical' (2001, p. 175). Murdoch does not only apply this idea to shared metaphorical structures that are part of the central concepts of ethical theories (e.g., the metaphor of movement that underlies the idea of 'will' or 'action') but to personal idiosyncratic imaginings that form the thick concepts that are part of our imaginative apprehensions. Thus, when Murdoch uses certain concepts in her description of M's understanding of D, she is not referring to an unambiguous language of facts, but rather to structures that are 'cloudy and shifting' because of their imaginative components (Murdoch, 1999, pp.74-57, as cited in Diamond, 2010, p. 53). Murdoch considers apprehension as a process where one (aims to) gradually get a better grip on the world that surrounds us. Because concepts figure in our apprehension of reality that is a gradual process, Murdoch calls our apprehension of the concepts themselves 'at any rate an altering and complicating process' (2001, p. 28) When M looks at D, and she imaginatively apprehends her

through the eyes[27]of concepts (e.g., 'juvenile', or 'youthful'), she explores M's identity but also the meaning of being youthful. When she looks at D, she asks herself who D is and, at the same time, whether her idea of being juvenile or youthful is accurate. Maybe M held the view that a married woman or a daughter-in-law can't be young-hearted, as she had the image of a wife or a daughter-in-law as a quiet, perhaps even submissive woman. By looking at M again, she understands that youthfulness can also mean something else than being immature.

The concepts in the example of M and D must thus not be understood as 'standing terms'. As Diamond remarks, Murdoch 'did not see having a concept as basically a matter of being able to recognize and discriminate a pattern in things' (2010, p. 75). Rather, Murdoch emphasizes 'our capacity to develop through language and especially through the use of metaphor and "semi-sensible" pictures some way of making sense of things' (2010, p.75). The line between language and images is porous in Murdoch's thinking. One might even argue, like Mylonaki does, that the moral concepts that M uses to apprehend D's reality *are* 'images in and through which M approaches D. Getting closer to D's reality is often a matter, as in M's case, of replacing one set of images for another (youthful, gay, etc.). In all cases, getting closer to an individual reality is a matter of progressively getting rid of the false images' (Mylonaki, 2019, p. 594).

Murdoch is not alone in her idea of concepts as metaphorical structures. Two decades after Murdoch wrote *The Sovereignty of Good*, Mark Johnson argued that 'moral concepts (e.g., will, action, purpose, rights, duties, laws) are defined by systems of metaphors' and that we 'understand morally problematic situations via conventional metaphorical mappings' (1993, p. 33). Johnson operates from a completely different background than Murdoch (i.e., cognitive semantics and pragmatism) and does not refer once to her work but comes to similar conclusions. In his work, Johnson offers a genealogical analysis of moral concepts such as the ones mentioned before. He argues how their current meaning derives from the metaphor (pervasive in Western countries) that *Moral Interactions Are Commodity Transactions*: namely, moral actions are

[27] Panizza uses the metaphor of eyes as well in her article (2020, p. 280)

understood as commodity transactions, well-being as wealth, duties as debt, rights as letters of credit and so on (1993, pp. 42-46).

Like Murdoch, Johnson thinks that concepts are metaphorically structured and that our understanding of moral situations rests on imaginative apprehension that Johnson understands in terms of metaphorical framing:[28][29]

> Consider, for example, an act in which members of a state police force break into a home and confiscate certain documents written in secret by the home owner. Framed as an invasion of privacy, we make one judgment about the action, whereas framing it as the confiscation of seditious materials in a time of national emergency might justify a radically different judgment. (1993, p. 192)

The similarity between Murdoch and Johnson is that they both show that the way we understand reality (and thus the concepts that are part of this understanding) depends on changeable imaginative structures. I refer to Johnson here because it shows how you can arrive at similar insights from a different background. Of course, there are differences between Johnson and Murdoch. A first difference is that Johnson because of his background in cognitive semantics, understands those imaginative structures mainly in terms of linguistic metaphors. Murdoch also refers to the term metaphor, but because of the Platonic influence in her work, she tends to understand imaginative apprehension ultimately in terms of images. A second, bigger, difference between Murdoch and Johnson is that Johnson's claims about the metaphorical structure of concepts is limited to classic moral-philosophical vocabulary (e.g., 'rights', 'duties') and common evaluative concepts (e.g., 'lie'). Murdoch goes further than Johnson in this respect. In 'The Idea of Perfection', Murdoch asks 'Why not consider red as an ideal endpoint, as a concept infinitely to be learned, as an individual object of love? A painter might say, 'You don't know what "red" means' (2001, p. 29). This might sound strange at first. Aren't there concepts whose content is clearly defined, such as colors, where no imaginative

[28] Different from Murdoch is Johnson's claim that, ultimately, metaphors stem from our embodied ways of being in the world (see also Johnson, 1987).

[29] Although metaphor is Johnson's main focus, he distinguishes several imaginative 'resources' such as image schemas, prototype structures (see below), semantic frames, metonymy, and narrative.

apprehension is needed to understand their meaning? While it is obviously the case that most of us hold a common understanding of what something like 'red' means, I think Murdoch is right in saying that our knowledge of most concepts can be infinitely perfected. We might indeed think of a painter saying to a colleague or laymen that she does not know what red means, when he thinks her idea of colour use is superficial or wrong. Similarly, it is not difficult to think of parallel expressions (*you do not know what love/lying/friendship is* …) in the context of moral discussions. This is no relativist refusal of shard conceptual knowledge but a plea for the perfectibility of knowledge of concepts via imaginative apprehension and I think that is broadly applicable to many kinds of concepts. Look for instance at how Marcel Proust writes in the third part of his *Recherche Du Temps Perdu* how even something seemingly unambiguous as someone's name (in this case 'Guermantes') contains imaginative contents that we imaginatively apprehend:

> The name Guermantes of those days is also like one of those little balloons which have been filled with oxygen, or some such gas; when I come to explode it, to make it emit what it contains, I breathe the air of the Combray of that year, of that day, mingled with a fragrance of hawthorn blossom blown by the wind from the corner of the square, harbinger of rain, which now sent the sun packing, now let him spread himself over the red woolen carpet to the sacristy, steeping it in a bright geranium scarlet, with that, so to speak, Wagnerian harmony in its gaiety which makes the wedding service always impressive. But even apart from rare moments such as these, in which suddenly we feel the original entity quiver and resume its form, carve itself out of the syllables now soundless, dead; if, in the giddy rush of daily life, in which they serve only the most practical purposes, names have lost all their colour, like a prismatic top that spins too quickly and seems only grey, when, on the other hand, in our musings we reflect, we seek, so as to return to the past, to slacken, to suspend the perpetual motion by which we are borne along, gradually we see once more appear, side by side, but entirely distinct from one another, the tints which in the course of our existence have been successively presented to us by a single name. (2003, p. 10)

Given that Murdoch considers our knowledge of reality to be our main moral task, one could say that, according to her, a concept like red is a moral concept, and thus all concepts are moral concepts. Diamond argues that 'the range of what she would consider a moral concept is much greater than what most philosophers would consider a moral concept' (Diamond, 2010, p. 84). For Murdoch concepts as 'redness' can perfectly fit in this range. As long concepts are part of the way we look at the world, they are morally relevant.[30] This might seem an extreme claim, but how extreme it is depends on how you approach Murdoch's philosophy. Murdoch is known for her moral realism, which endorses the reality of the Good, but in this work, I focus mainly on the role of concrete objects of reality in Murdoch's work. In Part III (chapter 12) I will argue that Murdoch does not instrumentalize our apprehension of concrete objects of reality as mere stepping stones to understand the metaphysical reality of the Good. Thus, I do not think Murdoch considers all concepts as 'moral' because our understanding of them takes us closer to the transcendent moral reality of the Good. The key point here, I think, is that a perfectible imaginative apprehension of concepts can be part of understanding concrete objects of reality, such as other persons. Seen this way, there are not many concepts that would be *a priori* excluded from the moral realm, but this does not necessitate all concepts always and everywhere being morally charged.

8.9. Creative Imaginative Apprehension

The idea of moral perception as imaginative apprehension locates imagination very deep into our everyday moral thinking. The basic idea is that we do not approach the world from a neutral point of view, from which, modeled on the idea of the scientific observer, we can register certain concepts or properties, but that we understand that reality through imaginative exploration.

This idea makes room for a moral application of creativity. As I explained in chapter 8, creativity is generally thought of as dependent on imaginative exploration to arrive at new or innovative ideas. Murdoch herself seems to apply the adjective 'creative' to her

[30] Moreover, she connects 'redness' in this example with art, which she considers our 'entry into (...) the good life' (2001, p. 63).

distinction between fantasy and imagination in this spirit. The process of moral perception can, after all, be seen as an imaginative exploration through images, metaphor,s and concepts that should lead to an 'innovated' understanding of reality.

Cora Diamond (1991) hints at such a moral application of creativity. Diamond demonstrates how creative thinking is part of our moral thought in an essay she wrote in response to Nussbaum's 1985 article that discusses the example of Adam and Maggie Verver. Diamond agrees with Nussbaum on the importance of imagination in moral thought and offers a fragment of Plato's *Crito* as an example of a moral exercise of creativity. In this fragment, Socrates tries to convince his friend Crito that escaping prison would be wrong:

> "Observe then, Socrates," perhaps the laws would say, "that if what we say is true, what you are now undertaking to do to us is not right. For we brought you into the world, nurtured you, and gave a share of all the good things we could to you and all the citizens. Yet we proclaim, by having offered the opportunity to any of the Athenians who wishes to avail himself of it, that anyone who is not pleased with us when he has become a man and has seen the administration of the city and us, the laws, may take his goods and go away wherever he likes (…) But we say that whoever of you stays here, seeing how we administer justice and how we govern the state in other respects, has thereby entered into an agreement with us to do what we command; and we say that he who does not obey does threefold wrong, because he disobeys us who are his parents, because he disobeys us who nurtured him, and because after agreeing to obey us he neither obeys us nor convinces us that we are wrong, though we give him the opportunity and do not roughly order him to do what we command, but when we allow him a choice of two things, either to convince us of error or to do our bidding, he does neither of these things." (Plato, 1966, 51c – 52a)

Diamond criticizes William Frankena's analysis (1963, pp. 1-3) of this example in his introduction to moral philosophy. Frankena uses the example to demonstrate 'how a reflective and serious moral agent solves problems by the application of moral principles' (1991, p. 310). This classic idea of moral reasoning considers Socrates as offering three arguments that each consist of two premises, one moral principle and one statement of fact. But Diamond thinks that this interpretation is odd, as one of Socrates' arguments is that 'we

ought to obey or respect our parents and teachers, and if Socrates escapes he will be disobeying his parent and teacher' (1991, p. 310). The first premise is a principle, but the second one cannot be called a *fact*. Otherwise, the Laws of Athens must be Socrates' *actual* parents or teachers, which is obviously not the case. What happens instead, Diamond argues, is that Socrates persuades Crito that escaping would be wrong by personifying the Laws of Athens. Just as Adam accepts Maggie's decision by imagining her as a free and fearless sea creature, Socrates offers Crito a new way to think about the situation by representing the Laws of Athens as his parents and teachers. Diamond argues that their dialogue

> signals an entirely different view of what is involved in moral life, in life *simpliciter*, in which possibility and the exercise of creativity are linked. What is possible in Socrates' story is something unthought of by his friends and depends on his *creative* [emphasis added] response to the elements of his situation, his capacity to transform it by the exercise of *creative imagination* [emphasis added], and thus to bring what he does into connection with what has happened in his life. The idea of possibilities as fixed in advance and built into the situation locates the moral agent's responsibility and his freedom in quite a different place from where one sees it if one takes the capacity for improvisation as essential in any account of our moral life. (1991, p. 312)

Diamond argues that Socrates here does not convince Crito by bringing some clear facts under a moral principle. Such an analysis problematically neglects 'how one comes to see [the facts] or describe them' in moral thinking (310.). Diamond explains Socrates imaginative personification of the Laws of Athens as a creative response: Socrates reacts to Crito's encouragement to escape his cell by communicating an innovative imaginative apprehension of the context that makes Crito see Socrates' situation in another light. Diamond describes moral life - as it requires such moments of creative imaginative apprehension - as an *adventure*.[31] She compares

[31] Diamond's notion of adventure is based on another article of Nussbaum where the latter describes deliberation as 'an *adventure* of the personality 'undertaken against terrific odds and among frightening mysteries' (Nussbaum, 1983, p. 43, as cited in Diamond, 1991, p. 313).

this idea of adventure to the adventure of the mountaineer who needs to respond to the unexpected:

> The sense of adventure, expressed there, is closely linked to the sense of life, to a sense of life as lived in a world of wonderful possibilities, but possibilities to be found only by creative response. The possibilities are not lying about on the surface of things. Seeing the possibilities in things is a matter of a kind of transforming perception of them. The possibilities yield themselves only as it were under pressure' (1991, p. 313)

Murdoch and Diamond consider moral thinking – or perception in Murdoch's terms – as a creative act of 'freely and creatively exploring the world' (Murdoch, 1992, p. 321) that opens up new possibilities. At this point, the idea emerges that imaginative apprehension of the world is itself a creative act.

In this chapter I explained Murdoch's model of moral imagination as imaginative apprehension of reality in different steps. Murdoch's presents in her work the inner activity of paying attention to reality, which Murdoch describes in terms of love, perception, and imagination. After discussing her ideas of attention and love, I spent most time on the crucial role of imagination in that inner moral activity, which I characterized as the imaginative apprehension of reality, by which we imaginatively explore the reality of other objects of reality. Now I have unpacked the Murdochian model of moral imagination as imaginative apprehension, I will devote the next two chapters to two possible concerns that might arise in response to this model (chapter 9) and I will examine to what extent Murdoch and Diamond's understanding of creative imagination is applicable to contextually innovative moral creativity (chapter 10).

9. Two Concerns

In this chapter I consider two concerns that might arise in response to Murdoch's model of imaginative apprehension. One might question our ability to arrive at a better understanding of reality through imaginative apprehension because imaginative apprehensions might *distract us from what is real,* and they *might be dangerous*.

9.1. Imagination Distracts us From What is Real

One point of criticism of the model of imaginative apprehension might be that literary examples such as those of James, Proust, and Plato do not entirely correspond to our own experiences of moral reality, where we do produce less intricate apprehension. Do we sometimes just not see what we see? And is *that* not what morally matters: seeing what is going on without too many distractions?

I think this would be a reasonable line of criticism. There are some situations we understand or maybe even *should* understand in a quasi-direct way: immediate losses, terrible accidents, or tragic deaths, for example. However, the fact that we understand such situations directly does not have to make our understanding of them based on a purely factual, unimaginative view of them. Many of our direct understandings are built on imaginative apprehensions. Take for instance the following radio interview with Deepak Kamur, an Indian Mango farmer who discusses the impact of the March 2022 heatwave that destroyed his orchard that is his sole source of income. Kamur tells the interviewer that 'when I look on the trees, these are trees that my grandfather planted. *It's not just my living, it's my family's legacy. That's what I see when I look at on these trees* [emphasis added]' (Linebaugh & Lee, 2022). Kamur's experience of his destroyed crops *is* a loss of tradition, of family wisdom that is lost. The second layer is not less direct than the sight of a destroyed field. It is inextricably part of it.

An example like Kamur's shows that there is no contradiction between directness and imaginative apprehension. Imagination is not equal to reflection. It can be part of direct experiences and can develop into more reflective apprehension. Kamur's example shows

such direct apprehension but there are also reflective variants. Take another example, a tragic death, someone who died too young. Friends and family may realize the person has died, but then they look deeper into what her death means. What was lost? Did that person live the life she wanted? How should we remember her? Such explorative questions represent how we try to develop our understanding of such matters through imaginative apprehensions.

If we may call Murdoch's philosophy an account of moral knowledge, it concerns the type of knowledge that shows in these kinds of examples. Not knowledge that develops from concrete cases to abstract categories, but the development of which can be characterized, indeed, as a as 'sort of seeping of colour' (Murdoch, 1966, p. 49); a continuously evolving constellation of paint strokes that reveal the particularity of someone or something. In such a characterization, it is meaningless to distinguish between a direct unimaginative and a reflective imaginative apprehension.

9.2. Imagination is Dangerous

It is true that imaginative apprehension can take the shape of comforting, delusional, and harmful apprehensions that prevents us from seeing the world as it is. This is what Murdoch calls fantasy. Remember how I suggested we should treat fantasy and imagination as two names for two tendencies of imaginative apprehension. Imagination is driven by the urge to explore that what surrounds us, fantasy approaches reality through the needs of our egos; it is mediated by our interests, wishes, desires, vanities, fears, delusions, and so on. The first part of Murdoch's example of M and D is one such example of fantasy, where M perceives D through her own biases and worries. Let's consider some other, more elaborate fantastical forms of imaginative apprehension. First, a clear, grotesque, off-putting example of fantasy:

> Vienna appeared to me in a different light. Now, wherever I went, I saw Jews, and the more strikingly and obviously were they different from other people... Judaism suffered a heavy set-back in my eyes when I got to know of its activities in the Press, in art, literature, and the drama... It was pestilence, spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death, with which our nation was being inoculated (Hitler, 1933, as cited in Chappell, 2017, p. 50).

The first is a fragment of one of the 21st century most infamous books, Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Sophie Grace Chappell cites this fragment as an unambiguous example of egocentric, closed-off thinking. Hitler, who rapidly became homeless after being rejected twice by the Vienna academy of Fine Arts, 'perceives Vienna as a place that is hostile to him personally and infers that Vienna is *bad*.' Chappell encourages us to 'notice the gross egocentricity of this move (and then pause to ask yourself whether you are quite sure you've never made any similar moves yourself' (2017, p. 45). Chappell's last question is spot-on. Fantasy does not only concern to grotesque figures and thoughts (such as the fascist *endlüsong* to secure the welfare and persistence of the 'Aryan race') but is a tendency deeply embedded in the human mind. The faulty inference 'A is wrong/bad… because *I* don't like B (which is only a small part of A) is a human all too human self-consoling move. The following example, which is a personal anecdote, is a more subtle expression of this move:

> I remember being stranded in Brussels at 3 a.m., after a difficult night of hitchhiking from Paris. The cash machines in Brussels faced a technical malfunction and we had no money on us, which meant we had to give up the plan of spending the second part of the night in a bar waiting for the first train. Instead, we ended up on the cold floor of the central station, counting the hours and fighting the sleep. From that night on, my companion during that trip refers to Brussels as an unpleasant city.

The difference between these two examples is huge, and by no means I want to give the impression that I compare my travel companion with the persona of Hitler. I use this anecdote to show how the self-consoling move that underlies Hitler's fascist propaganda also shows in mundane, banal variants. In the second example, Brussels is perceived unpleasant because of the few unpleasant hours spent there. This example, compared to the first, is rather unharmful: there are no comparisons between groups of people and deadly diseases. However, it is not difficult to imagine someone lapsing in a grotesque variant of the second example, who extends his judgment to the local population, concluding that Brusselians are unpleasant, lazy people.

As these two examples show, fantasy roots from concerns about the self instead of attention to the world. Hitler ascribes the difficult living conditions for himself and other Germans in Vienna (a rapidly expanding metropolis at the time) to the growing Jewish population and presents them as a life-threatening bacterium threatening the Germanic population and culture. Unfortunately, Hitler was not the last to describe people in such dehumanizing terms. The following excerpt from a column in *The Sun*, cited by Silvia Panizza in her paper on Murdochian moral perception, comments on the event of a refugee boat that capsized off the coast of Lybia:

> No, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care (…) These migrants are like cockroaches (…) Drilling a few holes in the bottom of anything suspiciously resembling a boat would be a good idea, too. (Hopkins, 2015, as cited in Panizza, 2020, p. 276)

The image of refugees as cockroaches springs from ego-centric concerns: fear of other cultures and things unknown, fear of adapting to a world that changes rapidly, fear to lose one's cultural identity, and so on. These terrible descriptions dehumanize refugees and are at the basis (or serve as reinforcements of) wrong ideas and inferences, e.g., refugees are here to 'steal' the work of the native population, they come here to freeload on the European welfare systems, they aim to replace Western culture by theirs, and so forth.

A classic approach of fighting such wrong inferences is a logical one: pointing at someone's faulty inferences in the hope that they will see their mistakes. But very often such responses are ineffective in changing people's minds. One of the reasons is the strong, egocentric fantastic imagery at the base of such inferences. Living the bohemian life of a failed artist in Vienna, a city overcrowded by refugees at that time, gave rise to the image of the Jews as a spreading pestilence.

We live in times where strong images are an omnipresent part of the way we communicate, of entertainment products, news media, and social media. Hopkins' portrayal of migrants as cockroaches might result from the same thinking style of the other

two examples: she might have had some bad experiences with migrants in her nearby environment, thereby concluding that all migrants deserve to drown. However, of even more influence might be the anti-immigration climate that has been developed in Europe, the UK, and the US where immigrants and refugees (especially those with a Muslim background) are systematically portrayed as a threat. The alt-right movement has been particularly successful in spreading the image of immigrants and refugees as a plague that invades and threatens the Western world and culture by internet memes comparing them with, for example, insects or orcs.[3233] Resisting and changing such imaginings is challenging because they are pervasive in individual or social thinking. Nevertheless, I think Murdoch is right in her idea that moral thought does not shift simply by confrontation with abstract argument, but through transformation and change of dominant images. For Murdoch, the solution lies *within* imaginative apprehension, not outside.

I do not want to defend some form of irrationalism here. Logical arguments can without a doubt help us on the road to inclusion. However, I believe that we, as individuals and as a society, should focus on the reshaping of central dominant imaginings as well. One way to do this is by providing other images or narratives. Think of how, for example, decolonial thinkers try to balance dominant Western narrative with other narratives (see, e.g., Mills, 2007; Wekker, 2016). Such processes of reshaping social imaginaries and resulting imaginative apprehensions are complex and difficult, they evoke a lot of social resistance and develop slowly. Nonetheless, they can be crucial in the adjustment of moral thought, as they aim directly at its imaginative basis.

Further, on an individual level idiosyncratic phantasies can be pervasive and haunting. But also here, a significant part of reshaping them lies within the process of imaginative apprehension. See for instance the following fragment of Milan Kundera's debut novel *The Joke*. This novel tells the fictional story of Ludvik Jan, who gets expelled from the Czechoslovakian communist party after making a joke about Marxism ('Optimism is the opium of the people'). This silly joke marks a turning point in Ludvik's life. He is expelled from

[32] Orcs are goblin-like monsters that became a popular part of contemporary fantasy culture through J.R.R. Tolkien's portrayal of them in *The Lord of The Rings*.
[33] See Dafaure, 2020.

the party after a vote, sent to a labor camp with other critics of the regime, and viewed as a social pariah. The image of the vote continues to haunt the main character in his engagement with others:

> The image of that lecture hall with a hundred people raising their hands, giving the order to destroy my life, comes back to me again and again. Those hundred people had no idea that things would one day begin to change, they counted on my being an outcast for life. Not out of a desire for martyrdom but rather out of the malicious obstinacy characteristic of reflection, I have often composed imaginary variations; I have imagined, for example, what it would have been like if instead of expulsion from the Party the verdict had been hanging by the new; No matter how I construe it, I can't see them doing anything but raising their hands again, especially if the utility of my hanging had been movingly argued in the opening address. Since then, whenever I make new acquaintances, men or women with the potential of becoming friends or lovers, I project them back into that time, that hall, and ask myself whether they would have raised their hands; no one has ever passed the test: every one of them has raised his hand in the same way my former friends and colleagues (willingly or not, out of conviction or fear) raised theirs. You must admit: it's hard to live with people willing to send you to exile or death, it's hard to become intimate with them, it's hard to love them. (Kundera, 1993, p. 76)

I think we should not treat 'fantasy' as a common human tendency, not as a pejorative term by which we dismiss people with different thoughts. People are 'fantasizing imaginative animals' (1992, p. 323): both tendencies are part of our apprehensions. *The Joke* shows more clearly than the other examples how fantasy and imagination are often intertwined. On the one hand, Ludvik's image is grotesque and simplifying but on the other hand, it reflects the paranoia of totalitarian regimes.[34] They are known for suspecting and punishing anything that relativizes its ideology, including silly jokes so we can

[34] *The Joke* is fiction but was inspired by a similar event Milan Kundera and his friend Jaroslav Dewetter experienced themselves in 1949, during Czechoslovakia's communist era. Kundera and Dewetter's letters were intercepted and read by the secret police, after which they got expelled from the Communist Party (Třešňák & Hradilek, 2008).

understand how Ludvik came to this voting room 'test', although we realize it is harmful and simplifying.

Ludvik himself struggles with this image. Ludvik is obsessed with guilt. Throughout the novel, he seeks for ways to take revenge on those who betrayed him. However, he finds out his attempts are pointless:

> Yes, suddenly I saw it clearly: most people deceive themselves with a pair of faiths: they believe in *eternal memory* (of people, things, deeds, nations) and in *redressibility* (of deeds, mistakes, sins, wrongs). Both are false faiths. In reality the opposite is true: everything will be forgotten and nothing will be redressed. The task of obtaining redress (by vengeance or by forgiveness) will be taken over by forgetting. No one will redress the wrongs that have been done, but all wrongs will be forgotten. (Kundera, 1993, p. 294)

The Joke can be read as the story of someone who, throughout his life continuously tries to grasp how people behave in a totalitarian regime, what their motives are, how far their complicity reaches and so on. This process reflects how Murdoch thought about moral perception, as an ongoing process of progressively destroying and reshaping false images. However, imaginative apprehension is not an unambiguously progressive process of coming to see the world as it is. While this might be sometimes suggested by Murdoch's references to Platonic ascension, Murdoch was aware that, at the same time, fantastical apprehensions often keep on interfering with our views. Ludvik's last revelation – that everything will be forgotten, and nothing will be redressed – successfully exposes his own obsession with guilt and revenge – but is at the same time simplifying in its urge to arrive at a universal truth that applies to everyone. In our apprehensions of reality, fantasy and imagination often accompany one another.

9.3. Sticking To the Facts

The presence of fantastic tendencies in the process of imaginative apprehension can get in the way of our understanding of reality. Just as Murdoch warns of self-consoling fantasy, Diamond warns that there is no guarantee 'the magic worked by a vivid imagination will not lead you into deep trouble.' Diamond warns, however, for

another 'greater danger' she calls 'inattention, the refusal of adventure' (1991, p. 315). When we refuse to embark on adventure, to use Diamond's terminology, when we refuse to use our imagination to expand and deepen our view, we risk what Nussbaum calls 'obtuseness and refusal of vision' (1985, p. 515). Thinkers such as Murdoch, Nussbaum, Johnson, and Diamond argue that our moral experiences do not merely consist of unambiguous facts and they think it is a bad idea to actively oppose imaginative apprehension, resulting from a will to *stick to the facts*.

When we compare descriptions of adventurous imaginative apprehensions with descriptions where they seem to lack, we do indeed miss something fundamental. See, for example the following diary excerpt from Uwe Timm's book *In My Brother's Shadow*. Timm writes about his older brother Karl-Heinz, who joined the SS *Totenkopf Division* during World War II and died 1943 in Ukraine. After his death, his family received a diary consisting of fragments like this:

4 August
Back to Belgorod again. Wehrmacht can't hold it. Ivan broken through.
5 August
Russ. Aircraft attack km-long column. Gasoline-driven vehicles blow up. 2 dead and 2 wounded in Comp.
6 August
Still moving on. (Timm 2005: 123)

In his novel, Uwe Timm tries to find out his brother's motives to join the SS and his thoughts on the gruesome war he ended up in. What shocks him is the abstract and superficial character of his diary:

> The diary includes no anti-Semitic remarks or stereotyped phrases like those found in letters sent from the front by other soldiers: inferior humans, filth, vermin, Russian dolts. On the other hand there is no phrase betraying anything like sympathy, no hint of any criticism of the conditions of the time, nothing to make a sudden conversion plausible. His notes show neither a killer by conviction nor incipient resistance. What they seem to express - and this I find terrifying - is partial blindness: only what is *ordinary* is recorded. (2005, p. 140)

What Timm misses in the diary of his brother are imaginative apprehensions: observations of the value of human life, one's role in a disastrous conflict, and personal motivations: Reading the diary is terrifying because it seems to show what Nussbaum calls 'obtuseness and refusal of vison' (1985, p. 515). Of course, we do not know whether Timm's brother wrote more than he left behind, nor do we know his motivations for writing it. Perhaps he was not morally insensitive at all and these detached notes offered him some psychological self-protection in the brutal environment he ended up. No more context is given that might shine a light on these questions. However, that does not take away the disturbing feeling one gets when reading these fragments, exactly because they seem to lack something morally essential: the imaginative apprehensions through which we make sense of reality.

In our moral task of seeing the world as it is, we should not attempt to distinguish imagination from 'the facts': imagination helps us grasp the particularity and meaning of that reality. It is undeniably true we are often hindered by fantasy, which creates apprehensions out of concern for the self rather than the world beyond oneself. Nonetheless, it seems pointless to deny or actively oppose such apprehensions, out of a scientific urge to separate the facts from interpretation. This is at odds with how we morally apprehend the world. The remedy against fantasy is not escaping but reshaping imagination.

10. Imaginative Apprehension and Moral Creativity

In the preceding sections of Part II, I argued that imaginative apprehension is needed to explore moral reality. Now the question remains to what extent this imaginative apprehension of reality is compatible with is the examples of contextually innovative moral creativity that I discussed in Part I.

It seems indeed true that moral change and improvement requires that we often apprehend things in a different way. Think for example about how creative initiatives arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Remember how, especially in Western countries that lacked collective memory of pandemics, there was at first a lot of uncertainty about the situation. We were, collectively and individually, in a state of incomprehension. But as soon as we started to apprehend the situation, certain images and metaphors were formed that offered insight. Take for instance the wide usage and the influence of the war metaphor that represented the virus as an enemy, the necessary measures as a collective battle and health workers as soldiers operating at the front line. There was and is disagreement about the aptness of such metaphors, but it is difficult to deny that this metaphor convinced many that the epidemic situation was serious. It figured in the realization that our societies faced a threat of which the risks were unevenly distributed across society but that we could collectively mitigate.

Imaginative structures through which we apprehend the situation do not just come out of the blue; they evolve from looking again and again at what happens. I can remember how certain events made impressions, such as the long train of hearses in Bergamo, one of the first European cities that had to deal with a collapsed health system and a vast number of victims. Or take the video messages of elderly and hospital patients that could not receive any visitors. Looking at these we do not see hearses or patients; we see long lines of death; we see loneliness and fragmentation of social ties. More aspects of the situation emerged when we developed and explored these imaginings.

Imaginative apprehensions by which we explore the particularity of the situation opens possibilities for change and

improvement. Imaginative apprehension is therefore part of moral creativity, that is all about contextual moral improvement. Initiatives such as *Les Gazelles De Bruxelles* one could argue, can only arise because of such imaginative apprehension. Those volunteers look at newcomers as fellow citizens, they see their difficulties, the weight on their shoulders and explore possibilities of low-key mutual engagement, such as running together. This is compatible with Murdoch's framework, where moral improvement stems from the way we look at things. How else can we explain why German and Allied soldiers started singing Christmas carols and entered No Mans Land to fraternize? Some of those acts were undoubtedly impulsive (and some soldiers paid with their lives for being the first of their regiment to jump over the parapet. However, these acts seem to require seeing the soldiers on the other side as something different than enemies: fellow Christians, men away from home, or human beings suffering from constant threat and violence.

10.1. Imaginative Apprehension and Overt Action

Imaginative apprehension of reality is needed to see what is going on, to see the possibilities of certain situations. In this sense I think Murdoch and Diamond were right to use the term 'creativity' in describing the possibility of imagination to provide innovative and valuable visions of reality. However, there seems to be something missing in this idea of creativity to fully grasp the contextually innovative nature of the examples of Part I. There I described moral creativity as valuable change and improvement *in a particular context*; this moral creativity involves overt actions[35]: fraternizing, storytelling, negotiating, and so forth.

Murdoch aims to shift the weight from overt actions to inner actions in moral philosophy, from publicly observable acts to the inner activity of attention. Inspired by Plato, Murdoch describes the moral life in terms of knowledge: if we have correct knowledge of the world (i.e., if we imagine it aptly) much of our moral work has been done. Murdoch suggests that, when our view of the world is

[35] In this section, I partly paraphrase an argument I make in a forthcoming book chapter (Ratajczyk, in press), where I discuss Murdoch's model of moral imagination and the need of overt action in creativity.

right, good actions tend to follow. [3637] She uses the image of a magnetic field: 'one who perceives what is real will also act rightly. If the magnetic field is right our movements within it will tend to be right' (1966, p. 50). The idea is that when M does not see D any longer as undignified but spontaneous, she will act accordingly. However, the example of M and D shows a somewhat dubious relation of Murdoch's position to overt action. Murdoch assumes that the mother 'behaves beautifully to the girl throughout, not allowing her real opinion to appear in any way' (2001, p. 15). This doesn't quite match the image of the magnetic field in *The Darkness of Practical Reason*: we would expect a change of M's behavior towards D after her change of vision.

I think that because Murdoch emphasizes inner action, she loses track a bit of the difficulties of overt action. Imagine that, like in M's case, you have thoroughly adjusted your vision about something or someone. Is it then immediately clear what to do? I think that, after M perceives D in a different way, there will be at least some initial doubt or awkwardness about how to act. Should she address D differently now that knows she is not childish but full of life? Can she engage with her in activities she thought before D was uninterested in? Seeing people in a new light is one thing, acting according to a new vision might be something else. I think we often experience a gap between what we see and what we do. And if such a gap already exists between perceiving and relating to others, we can assume it is often present in creativity. A central challenge of creativity, one might say, is abridging the inner imagination and the overt change and improvement you seek to establish. It seems that equating imaginative apprehension with creativity – as is suggested by Murdoch and Diamond's use of 'creative' – would miss an important part of contextually innovative moral creativity: the

---

[36] This is a thought she takes over from Simone Weil, who argues that 'the attention turned with love towards God (or in a lesser degree, towards anything which is truly beautiful) makes certain things impossible for us. Such is the non-acting action of prayer in the soul. There are ways of behaviour which would veil such attention should they be indulged in and which, reciprocally, this attention puts out of the question' (2002, p. 119).

[37] Murdoch by no means *rejects* the importance of external action: 'overt actions are perfectly obviously important in themselves, and important too because they are the indispensable pivot and spur of the inner scene' (2001, p. 42). Her point is rather that good action tends to flow from good vision.

Gazelles go running with newcomers, Nelson Mandela *invited* Viljoen to his place, Scheharazade *told* stories, and the soldiers *sing* and *exchange gifts*. Through those actions they are able to bring ostensive change and improvement in their contexts.

However, this emphasis on the importance of overt actions in creativity goes against a popular view in aesthetics. Robert Audi suggested that Shakespeare would have been no less creative if he had 'written all his works mentally and never penned or communicate them' (Audi, 2018, p. 36). This idea of subordinating creative practice to imaginative ideas stems from aesthetic theory that identifies art with mental ideas. R.G. Collingwood's aesthetic expressivism, for example, holds that art is first of all a mental idea that we should call 'the work of art proper, and that the resulting act or product 'is only incidental to the first':

> The making of it is therefore not the activity in virtue of which a man is an artist, but only a subsidiary activity, incidental to that. And consequently this thing is a work of art, not in its own right, but only because of the relation in which it stands to the 'mental' thing or experience of which I spoke just now.' (Collingwood 1938, p. 37)

But do we not call Shakespeare creative *because* he enriched our culture with written books and plays? And do we not regard examples of moral creativity *creative* because they highlight innovative, ostensive moral *activity*? What these examples have in common, in addition to imaginative thought, are specific overt actions that were undertaken to respond to morally problematic situations or to aim for valuable outcomes. Sometimes this comprises a wide collection of several acts. In the case of the Christmas truce: multilingual singalong, exchange of gifts, shared burial sessions, and so forth. In other cases, it comes to one distinct intervention, such as Mandela's use of Afrikaans in his negotiations with Viljoen. With these acts, the soldiers realize a moment of fraternization and Mandela convinces Viljoen of peaceful cooperation. An essential part of moral creativity thus takes place outside our heads, in creative practice.

Berys Gaut calls 'being creative' a success-term: 'one must have actually done something creative in order to qualify and not merely have the ability to do something. In this it is like traits such

as kindness, niceness, reliability and so on' (2014, pp. 188-199).[38] According to Gaut, creativity is not merely an ability or a capacity, but a *dispositional excellence*. He offers the example of the 19th-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who quit poetry to travel after writing the poetic masterpieces *Une Saison en Enfer* and *Illumination*. In the second part of his life, he might still have had the ability to write great poetry, but no longer qualified as a creative poet: 'To be that, he would have had to actualise the ability on appropriate occasions: and he was no longer a poet, let alone a creative one' (2014, p. 188). According to Gaut, we cannot call the travelling Rimbaud a creative poet: after all, he simply did not write poetry anymore. It may be the case that Rimbaud got some imaginative ideas for verse during his travels, but that is not enough to speak of a creative poet. A creative poet writes or recites poetry, just as a creative painter paints and a creative architect builds maquettes.

Gaut is talking about creativity as a disposition, and his example is that of an artist, but his point that creativity is a success term is applicable to my contextual approach to moral creativity. Moral creativity requires a certain amount of realization; something is *done* with the imagination in a sense that extends beyond one's own private, mental realm. Being morally creative means translating one's imaginative apprehensions of reality into contextual change. Murdoch is right to stress that morality does not only concern overt moral activity. Imaginative apprehension is crucial to assess the particularity and possibilities of situations. The inner activity of imaginative apprehension is a part of the morally creative process. But moral creativity that brings contextual improvement needs overt actions that bring change in a certain context.

10.2. Imagination, Imaginativeness, Creativity

We seem to have arrived at a fundamental difference between imagination and creativity. Imagination is a psychological ability most of us possess.[39] The mental products of that imagination can

[38] In later work, Gaut relates the concept of success-term to Ryle's idea of 'success verbs' (Ryle, 1949, p.143, as cited in Gaut, 2018, p. 126).

[39] Of course, there are differences concerning the nature of individual imaginings. Some people seem to be better than others in imagistic thinking, others are better in motor imagery or conceptual imagery. In the 19th century, Galton already

be described, in a Murdochian fashion, as the products of an inner activity. Creativity, however, seems to require the realization or application of imaginative thought in overt action.

Not everyone agrees with this distinction between imagination and creativity. Grant (2012), for instance, treats 'imaginativeness' and 'creativity' as synonyms – and prefers the term imaginativeness. However, he distinguishes between 'doing or producing something imaginative and 'doing or producing something by using the imagination' as he stresses that 'it is certainly not the case that whenever one has imagined, one has done or produced something imaginative. There can be imaginative imagining and unimaginative imagining. Much imaginative literature is unimaginative.' (2012, p. 276). This makes sense. Not all uses of the imagination are imaginative; there seems to be a qualitative difference between different uses of the imagination; 'even unimaginative people can, and may in fact, think of lots of possibilities. They may imagine there are a billion stars in the sky, that there are a billion and one, etc. What determines whether you are imaginative is not merely the quantity but also the quality of the possibilities you think of' (2012, p. 281).

I agree with this observation, but I would still distinguish creativity from imaginativeness. While there seems indeed to be a difference of quality between unimaginative imaginings and imaginative imaginings there also seems to be a difference of contextual realization between imaginative imaginings on the one hand and creativity on the other hand. Being creative typically involves overt actions that put imaginative ideas into practice. Grant does not make this distinction. Because he does not make the distinction between imaginativeness and creativity, he has to deny Gaut's claim that creativity is a productive capactity:

> This is mistaken. If imaginativeness were an ability, then presumably it would be the ability to act or think imaginatively. But one can have the ability to act or think imaginatively without ever

observed variation in imaginary vividness (Galton, 1880). Recent research has identified *aphantasia* as a 'condition of reduced or absent voluntary imagery' (Zeman et. al, 2015, p. 375) and has found a prevalence of 3, 9 percent in a study group of 1000 persons (Dance et. al, 2022).

> actually acting or thinking imaginatively; and one cannot be an imaginative person without ever acting or thinking imaginatively. Therefore, imaginativeness is not an ability. The imagination is presumably an ability; but imaginativeness is not. Imaginativeness is, rather, a tendency or disposition. Tendencies and at least some human dispositions differ from the dispositions of inanimate objects in that they must occasionally be exercised. (2012, p. 282)

However, I think Grant's identification of imaginativeness and creativity is mistaken. Several directors might have dreamt of a production starring both Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio. They might have imagined some vivid scenes including them, but it was not until 2019 that someone (Quentin Tarantino, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) *made* such a movie. This difference is key to understanding the exact relation between imagination (an ability), imaginativeness (a quality), and creativity (a disposition that is realized in action.)

In his discussion of Plenty Coups moral H-creativity (Part I, section 3.2.), Mulgan offers an explicit and similar distinction between moral imaginativeness and moral creativity: 'The *morally imaginative* person envisages new ethical possibilities, while the *morally creative* person puts them into practice' (2018, p. 352). Mulgan holds that 'Moral *imaginativeness* explores surprising new ways to develop or extend one's existing store of moral concepts, values, norms and idioms, while moral *creativity* puts moral imaginativeness into practice. Moral creativity (…) is a practical activity with a theoretical dimension' (2018, p. 351). This distinction applies to contextually innovative creativity as well, where imaginative ideas are practiced in a particular context. Imaginative apprehensions are part of that morally creative process, but they have their limitation as they are what they are: ideas, images, visions, and so on. They explore the particularities and possibilities of a context and are thus innovative on a psychological level. On a contextual level, however, innovation comes about by overt creative action that brings situational improvement. Let me offer two more examples of moral creativity besides the ones that I have given before to support this claim.

The first is Mavis Biss' summary of an autobiographical story of comedian Jeff Simmermon (2009). Biss paraphrases the story to illustrate her argument for an action-related mode of imagination

that she defines as 'the capacity to generate new possibilities for realizing moral ends' (2014, p. 3). She argues that theories of moral imagination refer to moral imagination as 'a way of seeing' (her main references are Murdoch and Nussbaum) or as an aspect of moral judgment (her main reference is Dewey). Biss' focus is not so much the contextually innovative character of moral actions but an account of practical reason where moral imagination 'completes practical reason by generating new possibilities for realizing moral ends' (2014, p. 14). Without further explanation she casually mentions 'creativity' (and one time 'moral creativity') and 'creative' a couple of times (e.g., 'creative thinking', 'creative re-visioning', 'creative act-specification'). However, her example is a good illustration of the weight of overt acts in moral creativity:

> While working as a student teacher in the same school where his younger sister is a student, Jeff sees his sister's boyfriend violently push her up against a locker. He spends the day distracted, struggling to think of something he could do to protect his sister from further abuse. The boyfriend is no stranger to disciplinary action, which seems to have no effect on his behavior. Jeff also strongly doubts he could influence his sister's choices. Coincidently, Jeff encounters the boyfriend in the empty hallway at the end of the school day. He walks up to him, still uncertain about what he should do. And then . . . he *kisses* him! This spontaneous act surprises its originator as much as its recipient. Jeff concludes the story by noting that the delinquent had nothing more to do with his sister from this point forward. (2014, pp. 9-10)

Jeff puts an end to the violence against his sister by *what he does*; kissing his sister's boyfriend changes the context from the one moment to the next. He imaginatively apprehended the situation of his sister during the day, 'struggling to think of something he could do to protect his sister from further abuse' but it is his spontaneous and impulsive act that eventually changes her situation.

Another example is the following excerpt from Patrick Leigh Fermor's travel diary *Between the Woods and the Water*., cited by Sophie Grace Chappell. Fermor travelled from Hook of Holland to Constantinople in 1933-1934 and kept a diary in which he wrote about his encounters with people along the road. While traveling through the Transylvanian Carpathian Mountains, he meets an

orthodox Rabbi and two sons. The encounter is initially awkward due to their difference in culture and language, but when the three Jewish men engage Fermor in their recitation of the Torah, they manage to establish a connection between them:

> Everything took a different turn when scripture cropped up. The book in front of the Rabbi was the Torah, or part of it, printed in dense Hebrew black-letter that was irresistible to someone with a passion for alphabets; especially these particular letters, with their aura of magic. Laboriously I could phonetically decipher the sounds of some of the simpler words, without a glimmer of their meanings, of course, and the sign of interest gave pleasure. How did the Song of Miriam sound in the original, and the Song of Deborah; David's lament for Absalom; and the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley? The moment it became clear, through my clumsy translations into German, which passage I was trying to convey, the Rabbi at once began to recite, often accompanied by his sons. Our eyes were alight; it was like a marvelous game. Next came the rivers of Babylon, and the harps hanging on the willows: this they uttered in unfaltering unison, and when they came to "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem", the moment was extremely solemn (…) By this time the unworldly Rabbi and his sons and I were excited. Enthusiasm ran high. These passages, so famous in England, were doubly charged with meaning for them, and their emotion was infectious. (…) A feeling of great warmth and delight had sprung up and the Rabbi kept polishing his glasses, not for use, but out of enjoyment and nervous energy (…) I was brimming with excitement I had never thought I could get on such friendly terms with such unassailable-looking man.' (Fermor, 1986, p. 169, as cited in Chappell, 2017, pp. 51-52)

In a Murdochian spirit, Chappell offers Fermor's attitude towards the Jewish men as an example of someone with an open, imaginative attention towards other human beings (see 2017, pp. 55-58). [40] Her analysis is correct: Fermor is amazed at the beauty of the Rabbi's copy of the Torah and the language in which it is written and is willing to revise his initial prejudices. But what strikes me in this example is not only Fermor's openness and enthusiasm for alphabets and religious songs, but the moral creativity of the Rabbi

[40] And she contrasts this case with the example of Hitler that I used in section 9.2.

and his sons; the ways they engage Fermor in their intimate, religious ritual and so manage to establish a connection between them.

The two examples here can stand next to my earlier examples of moral creativity, where individuals or groups bring contextual change and improvement. And they confirm the importance of overt *action* in such creativity. Forming imaginative ideas is an important part of the creative process, but to lead to change and improvement, they need to be transfigured into reality. The difficulty of this step is often emphasized by creative artists. See, for example, Nina Holton, who in Csikszentmihalyi's qualitative psychological study on creativity talks about the hard work of turning an idea into a statue.

> That germ of an idea does not make a sculpture which stands up. It just sits there. So the next stage, of course, is the hard work. Can you really translate it into a piece of sculpture? Or will it be a wild thing which only seemed exciting while you were sitting in the studio alone? Will it look like something? Can you actually do it physically? Can you, personally, do it physically? What do you have by way of materials? So, the second part is a lot of hard work. And sculpture is like that, you see. It is the combination of wonderful wild ideas and then a lot of hard work. (Holton, as cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 62)

Holton rightly speaks of 'hard work'. Imaginative ideas cannot simply be 'converted' into a sculpture. Sculpting means scraping, cutting, and kneading until you get something valuable. One of the toughest and frustrating aspects of creative processes is turning ideas into reality (materials like marble in plastic arts). However, I think characterizing this process as a translation of a mental idea in a material artefact would be misleading. I consider the activity of sculpting as not merely a *translation* of a readymade imaginative idea into materiality but rather a *continuation* of the imagination into materiality. Creative processes in general are often 'less linear than recursive' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 80). It is doubtful that Kandinsky did possess a total mental picture of his monumental *Composition VII* before painting. On the contrary, documentation of his working process shows that the eventual canvas was the result of over thirty preceding drawings, watercolors, and oil studies

(Dabrowski, 1995). Examples of creative practice seem to show a different relation between imagination and creative practices than that of translation. Creativity is not imagination *plus* action, but imagination *in* action. I think there is no hard distinction to be made between a contemplative imagination on the one hand and practice on the other hand in a creative process. In Haruki Murakami's novel *Killing Commendatore*, the unnamed painter-protagonist describes this imagination in action as follows:

> This time I began with a rough draft. I stood up, grabbed a stick of charcoal, and stood before the canvas. On the blank space I created the spot where the man's face would go. With no plan, without thinking, I drew in a single vertical line. A single line, the focal point from which everything else would emerge. What would emerge was the face of a thin, suntanned man, deep wrinkles on his forehead. Thin, piercing eyes. Eyes used to staring at the far-off horizon. Eyes dyed the color of the sky and sea. Hair cut short, dotted with white. My guess, a taciturn, long-suffering man. Around that central line I used charcoal to add a few supplementary lines, so the outlines of the man's face would appear. I stepped back to look at the lines I'd done, made a few corrections, and added some new lines. What was important was believing in myself. Believing in the power of the lines, in the power of the space the lines divided. I wasn't speaking, but letting the lines and spaces speak. Once the lines and spaces began conversing, then color would finally start to speak. And the flat would gradually transform into the three-dimensional (…) I stepped back and examined the rough sketch I'd done from various angles. What I saw was the face of the man I'd remembered. Or rather the framework that should abide in that face. But there were a few too many lines. I needed to do some trimming. Subtraction was the order of the day. But that was for tomorrow. Best to end this day's work here. (Murakami, 2018, pp. 626-629)

In this scene, the painter starts to work at the portrait of an intriguing man he saw once. The imaginative work does not precede sketching but is part of the sketching practice itself. His visions of how the man and his portrait look like develops when his is putting charcoal lines on the canvas. Murakami's phenomenologically rich descriptions reveal how his creativity is indeed imagination in action. This relation between imagination and practice in the creative process applies to moral creativity as well. Moral creativity is no one-

sided activity of translating contemplative imagination into overt action, but a process where imagination develops during overt activity as well. I think that the Murdochian model alone is insufficiently equipped to describe this dynamic of morally creative processes. A general lesson the Murdochian tradition taught us is that one of our basic ethical tasks is the apprehension of the world. This philosophy is humbling as it emphasizes the place of other beings and things in the world and encourages us to develop our imagination to apprehend it well, but I think its idea of overt acts flowing from imaginative apprehension does not correspond with several examples of morally creative processes. Moral creativity does not simply originate from a need to realize one's imaginative apprehensions of reality, it springs from a context where people are already acting and where familiar practices and habits fall short. Take for instance the COVID-19 pandemic, which was an occasion where very basic habits and practices needed adjusting. We did not have to reinvent social gatherings bottom-up but needed imagination to reshape the ways we would under normal circumstances communicate, work, greet, and so on. The imagination that was needed was not a detached imagination, but an experimental and engaged imagination that tried to reshape particular actions and practices from within. I think this type of imagination was conceptualized by John Dewey, who considered imagination and deliberation not as a precursor, but as a part of action itself. The next chapter is dedicated to Dewey's theory of imagination, after which I will discuss Mark Coeckelbergh's Deweyan account of moral creativity.

11. John Dewey and the Imaginative Reconstruction of Action

Through habits formed in intercourse with the world, we also in-habit the world. It becomes a home and the home is part of our every experience.

Dewey, 2005, p. 108

John Dewey is one of the intellectual fathers of Classic American Pragmatism, a distinctive school of thought that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In his lecture *What Pragmatism means*, William James - one of the other founders - explains how pragmatism refers to the Greek *pragma* (*πρᾶγμα),* from which 'practice' and 'practical' are derived. Hence, pragmatism's main objective is to present a philosophy that starts from and focusses on the practical realm:

> A pragmatist (…) turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power.' (James, 2019, p. 23)

Pragmatism is best known for applying this method (especially by James) to truth resulting in the somewhat infamous *pragmatic theory of truth* that considers things true because they work in scientific or everyday practice.[41] However, the pragmatic method has been applied to other topics. Dewey applies a pragmatic method, among other subjects such as metaphysics, education, art, politics, and religion, to ethics.

His approach to ethics can be summarized as the 'practical art of helping people to live richer, more responsible, and more emotionally engaged lives' (Fesmire, `2015, p. 125). Dewey was very

[41] Pragmatic theories of truth come in different variants: 'Depending on the particular pragmatic theory, true statements might be those that are useful to believe, that are the result of inquiry, that have withstood ongoing examination, that meet a standard of warranted assertibility, or that represent norms of assertoric discourse' (Capps, 2019).

critical of modern ethical theory that, according to him, wrongly separated ethics from other disciplines, and narrowed it down to the defense of theoretical frameworks. Dewey propagates a more experimentalist and holistic approach to ethics; he believes ethics as a philosophical discipline should start from observation of human action rather than from theoretical hypotheses and that it cannot be disconnected from acquired insights from other philosophical disciplines and sciences.

Dewey embraces the idea of scientific validation and applies it to philosophy: insights should be distilled from (accounts of) human experience and action and constantly re-examined and validated against this background. While Dewey applies the idea of scientific validation to ethics, he is very critical for any form of reductionism. He strongly objected to the idea of *human nature* as a fixed set of natural dispositions or drives and the in his time growing behaviorist tendency to reduce human beings to organisms responding to environmental stimuli (Dewey, 1896). Instead, Dewey thinks we should understand human conduct as a process of ongoing experimentation. He approaches human beings as complex organisms that are in constant interaction with their environment. Ethics is for Dewey fundamentally about intelligently shaping and adjusting these interactions in an ever-changing context.

Dewey was author of an extensive body of work. Here, I aim to unpack the Deweyan conception of imagination to contrast it with the Murdochian conception of imagination. I will therefore focus mostly on the works where he wrote most elaborately on this topic, most notably *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922). Let's start with Dewey's model of human action and then continue with the role of imagination in this model.

11.1. Dewey and Habit

In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey approaches human action as the interpenetration of different operative *habits*, which he defines as

> that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; which contains within itself a certain ordering or systematization of minor elements of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation; and

> which is operative in some subdued subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity. Habit even in its ordinary usage comes nearer to denoting these facts than any other word. (2002, p. 40)

His use of the word 'habit' reaches beyond 'something that you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). With 'habit' we tend to refer to unreflective, seemingly automatic instances of human behavior, e.g., the way you greet friends or the order in which you put clothes on. Its link with thoughtlessness and automatisms gave rise to a distinctly pejorative connotation: 'Something annoying that someone does' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d..), e.g., the extravagant amount of toothpaste used by your partner. And it is commonly used to refer to behavior that is beyond our control ('bad habits', 'drug habits'). According to Dewey, however, habit mainly 'conveys the sense of operativeness, actuality.'[42] The primary function of habits is to induce a type of action and so govern our interaction with the world. But Dewey thinks this does not imply that our actions are only directed by unreflective behavioral patterns. He argues that we can adjust habits to the environment, or in his words, that we can make them more *intelligent*.

Dewey was deeply concerned with a progressive improvement of society and was worried about unquestioned customs guiding societal live and public policy. That is why he objected to the supposed opposition between habits as unreflective and repetitive behavior on the one hand and reflective, rational actions on the other hand. For Dewey, not all habits are repetitive 'blind' behavior. When it comes to moral improvement, he argued, 'the real opposition is not between reason and habit but between routine, unintelligent habit, and intelligent habit or art' (2002, p. 77).

[42] He distinguishes habits from attitudes and dispositions as he thinks the latter require 'a positive stimulus outside themselves to become active (…) we may employ them instead of the word habit to denote subdued, non-patent forms of the latter' (2002, p. 41).

11.2. A Traveler Faring Forth

Dewey thinks we can adjust and revise habits. He explains his account of human action with the metaphor of a 'traveler faring forth' (2002, p. 181). 'We may consider him first at a moment where his activity is confident, straightforward, organized. He marches on giving no direct attention to his path, nor thinking of his destination' (2002, p. 181) In these moments we rely without too many obstacles on habits operating together. Walking relies not only on motor reflexes but also on a sense of orientation, experience with one's physical limits, familiarity with specific contexts, and the use of attributes. Human action, simple and complex, is shaped by different acquired patterns of behavior (which Dewey calls habits). Something (seemingly) simple as conversating depends not only on the ability to talk, but the use of certain registers, social expectations, formal arrangements, and so on. Walks and conversations involve moments of harmony and rest, where all these elements are attuned to one another.

Obviously, human action is evenly characterized by impediments and obstacles: unexpected things that cross our paths or situations that take unexpected turns or that are new to us:

> Abruptly he is pulled up, arrested. Something is going wrong in his activity. From the standpoint of the onlooker, he has met an obstacle which must be overcome before his behavior can be unified into a successful ongoing. From his own standpoint, there is shock, confusion, perturbation, uncertainty. For the moment he doesn't know what hit him, as we say, nor where he is going. (2002, p. 181)

From William James' idea of the stream of consciousness as an alternation of 'flights and perchings' (1918, p. 243), Dewey derives the idea that 'life is interruptions and recoveries' (2002, p. 179). He considers human life as a constant interaction with the environment: 'in every waking moment, the complete balance of the organism and its environment is constantly interfered with and constantly restored' (2002, p. 179.) When passing through a forest, our walking might be slowed or stopped by a change of terrain, change of weather, or company that places certain demands on us. We adapt our walking pace, we move on more cautiously, we change clothes

or seek shelter and consult the needs of our friends to continue our course. Conversation can also be considered a series of interruptions and recoveries, where the speech acts of your conversation partner are reactions, additions, or corrections to your own thoughts and speech acts, that evoke at their turn new thoughts and speech acts from your side. Dewey was intrigued by this rhythm of human action – how we move from interruptions to recoveries and refinement of action -and even argued that this process marked the birth of consciousness. Dewey objected to the idea of consciousness as a separate 'stream or process or entity' (2002, p. 176) and the idea of an immaterial mind as something self-enclosed that shines its light on material reality. He described human experience as a process of 'doing and undergoing' (2005, p. 285). He was a proto-enactivist in criticizing a stark division between mind and embodied action who considered the mind not as a self-enclosed entity but as a cluster of different activities:

> Mind is primarily a verb. It denotes all the ways in which we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves. Unfortunately, an influential manner of thinking has changed modes of action into an underlying substance that performs the activities in question. It has treated mind as an independent entity *which* attends, purposes, cares, notices and remembers. This change of ways of responding to the environment into an entity from which actions proceed is unfortunate, because it removes mind from necessary connections with the objects and events, past, present and future, of the environment, with which responsive activities are inherently connected. Mind that bears only an accidental relation to the environment occupies a similar relation to the body. In making mind purely immaterial (isolated from the organ of doing and undergoing), the body ceases to be living and becomes a dead lump. (2005, pp. 274-275)

Dewey objects a dualism of mind and body. He opposes the image of mind as an immaterial substance that initiates our acting and consciousness as a reflective mode of that separated substance. Instead, he argues for an image of the mind as the name for several modes of action and consciousness as a phase of action that arises when functioning habits are impeded. His metaphor of a traveling faring forth offers a helpful illustration of this model. At some

moments, he wanders undisturbed through the forest, his walking is in sync with the environment so that he does not pay attention to the activity of walking. Suddenly, he is confronted by a hindrance and at that moment, he becomes aware of his walking and must adjust his course of action. At that moment, Dewey says, the traveler ventures into

> an investigation, a looking into things, a trying to see them, to find out what is going on. Habits which were interfered with begin to get a new direction as they cluster about the impulse to look and see. The blocked habits of locomotion give him a sense of where he *was* going, of what he had set out to do, and of the ground already traversed. As he looks, he sees definite things which are not just things at large but which are related to his course of action. The momentum of the activity entered upon persists as a sense of direction, of aim: it is an anticipatory project. In short, he recollects, observes and plans. (2002, pp. 181-182)

Since Dewey regards mind as a name we use for several modes of interaction with the environment, he regards the deliberation he describes above as a disintegrated phase of activity. To him, 'activity does not cease in order to give way to reflection; activity is turned from execution into intra-organic channels, resulting in dramatic rehearsal (2002, p. 191). This is the point where Dewey thinks imagination comes into play. Dramatic rehearsal is the term he uses for an experimental use of the imagination directed at the recovery and adaption of action.

11.3. Dramatic Rehearsal

Dewey considered imagination 'as much a normal and integral part of human activity as is muscular movement' (Dewey, 2015, p. 245) because he thought it enabled the *dramatic rehearsal*[43] during deliberation:

[43] Dewey did discuss imagination fragmentarily in several works (*Ethics*, *Democracy and Education, Human Nature and Conduct, Art as Experience* and *Reconstruction in Philosophy*.) I focus mostly on passage of *Human Nature and Conduct* as this is the only place – except from one passage in *Ethics* (see 2015, p. 1222) where he discusses *dramatic rehearsal* in a systematic way. Dewey scholarship mainly discusses the educational application of imagination. Some

> We begin with a summary assertion that deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action. It starts from the blocking of efficient overt action, due to that conflict of prior habit and newly released impulse to which reference has been made. Then each habit, each impulse, involved in the temporary suspense of overt action takes its turn in being tried out. Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like. It is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses, to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon. But the trial is in imagination, not in overt fact. The experiment is carried on by tentative rehearsals in thought which do not affect physical facts outside the body. Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable. (2002, p. 190)

Dewey's focus on habits, action, interaction, and the environment might initially give the impression that he reduces human action to observable acts and facts. However, Dewey saw an incredibly important role for imagination in the reconstruction and improvement of human action. When habits that under normal circumstances lead to similar (not identical) patterns of actions are impeded, a tension arises between what we are used to and the unknown future. Such tensions are omnipresent in our lives. *Should I behave differently towards a friend who lost his arm after an accident? Am I offering my children enough space to explore new things? What should I do now I feel my motivation for my job declined? What is my place in a group of friends with whom I have less affinity than before?* One question in these kinds of situation is how to reconcile past habits, experience, and know-how with the surprising and the unknown. According to Dewey, imagination plays a pivotal role here as it 'elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual' (2005, p. 359-60). Dramatic rehearsal is an experimental phase of action by which

scholars (most notably Fesmire, 2003) have focused on the relevance of Dewey's model of imagination as dramatic rehearsal for ethics (see also Alexander, 1990, 1993; Coeckelbergh, 2007, 2014; Johnson 2016).

different acts and their consequences are tried out to discover their possible meanings, consequences, reception, appropriateness, and feasibility: *I could behave differently towards Joanna now she lost her arm, but what would she think of that? Would she feel pitied? Will my children be happier when I react positively to their plans and dreams? Maybe I can discuss my struggles with my superior, but would she take my complaints seriously? We could go out together like we used to do to restrengthen our bonds, or would that not work in our current phase of life?*

Dewey regarded imagination as essential for conduct because it enables us to try out such possibilities. Imagination is for Dewey not something secondary, inferior to empirical experience or rational thought but something that is constitutive of intelligent (re)construction of action. He wanted to transcend empiricism or rationalism by approaching human action not from previously acquired knowledge but from within action itself. Acts are intelligent to Dewey not because they are based on empirically reliable sense data or general ideas but when they were deliberated by imaginatively testing them.

11.4. Dramatic Rehearsal as Enriched Experience

Dewey's idea is that dramatic rehearsal widens the scope of experience. By imaginatively trying out different courses of action and peering into the future, he argues, we acquire more significant experience that can figure in deliberation. Dewey's 'pragmatic pluralism' emphasizes the qualitatively rich and diverse character of such imaginatively enriched experience which can take different forms (Fesmire, 2003: 75). Sometimes there is a tendency to grasp Dewey's dramatic rehearsal only in terms of consequences which is probably a result of Dewey's earlier description of dramatic rehearsal in *Ethics* where he does indeed explain dramatic rehearsal in terms of consequences:

> Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way, in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow: and as we then like and approve, or dislike and disapprove, these consequences, we find the original impulse or plan good or bad. (2015, p. 1222)

In *Human Nature and Conduct,* however, Dewey is very critical of how classic utilitarianism identified consequences with the amount of future pain and pleasure provoked by an act. He appreciated the utilitarian movement's positive attitude towards consequences, but he argued that future pains and pleasures are too elusive to play a trustworthy role in deliberation by insisting that we cannot know nor feel how we will feel in the future. For Dewey, the point of intelligent deliberation is not to project ourselves in the future, the point is to imaginatively try out different possible acts and grasp the effects it provokes during the *present* moment of dramatic rehearsal. Some of these effects are affective: 'Joy and suffering, pain, and pleasure, the agreeable and is agreeable, play their considerable role in deliberation. Not, however, by way of a calculated estimate of future delights and miseries, but by way of experiencing present ones' (2002, p. 200). Take for example a situation where you deliberate on catching up with your old group of friends after meeting a former classmate, the idea of going out together might trigger certain emotional responses. The image of standing on the dancefloor amongst former classmates with whom you happen to have little in common might awaken a feeling of loneliness, or a sense of loss, while the prospect of a restaurant visit might give rise to a smaller amount of such sentiments, or other feelings like curiosity and conviviality. Dramatic rehearsal is for Dewey about being able to experience the richness of imaginative reconstruction of action, including the emotions this experimental imagination causes. Dewey is not a sentimentalist who considers emotions as the only path to good conduct (he might make such a claim about the imagination), but he stresses that the emotions we experience during the phase of dramatic rehearsal are more capable of guiding action than presumed emotions we project into the future. He considers dramatic rehearsal as an experimental test (and thus fallible) and thinks we should deliberate based on current (imaginatively extended) experience, rather than guesses about future experience. Dewey's idea is that, since we are venturing into the unknown anyway, it might be better to rely on current (imaginatively enriched) experiences rather than guesses about future ones. In planning our reunion with old friends, it is impossible to know how things will pan out during that reunion. Dewey's model of dramatic rehearsal

suggests it is better to rely on experiences evoked during such dramatic rehearsal than guesses about future feelings.

11.5. Dramatic Rehearsal is Practical and Social

The examples of dramatic rehearsal that I have used up to this point (e.g., the traveler that is interrupted in his journey, someone who doubts to maintain old friendships) seem to show individuals who are hindered in their activity, then 'take a break' to dramatically rehearse and then act. However, Dewey's dramatic rehearsal is no theoretical or detached mode of imagination, in which someone draws back and makes a judgment. Steven Fesmire argues that dramatic rehearsal is no matter of a mere 'private soliloquy' before jumping, but a practical and socially shaped imagination:

> For example, a family pondering whether to buy a particular house imagines day-to-day life in and around the house, mortgage payments, repair costs, and other aspects. They must consider these in relation to their careers, economic circumstances, long-term goals, and moral social-political priorities. This is more than an armchair affair. Moreover, it is not a matter of prancing arbitrarily in one's mind from one imagined scenario to another (…) Effective imagination about this requires visits to the house, research, consultation with specialists, and most importantly, since democratic colloquy is more trustworthy than cloistered soliloquy, a great deal of communication with each other. (2003, pp. 70-71)

Dramatic rehearsal is not a withdrawal from the practical realm to give room to inner reflection, but 'effective imagination' that develops while acting. For instance, one's deliberation about the purchase of real estate gets richer when once one starts house hunting, making agreements with lenders, and so forth. This contextual and practical character of Deweyan dramatic rehearsal mirrors the contextual and practical character of the other meaning of 'dramatic rehearsal': that of an actor rehearsing a role. He could do this anywhere. He could rehearse whilst shopping for groceries, during weekly swimming sessions or even during a boring conversation. But we all know that certain environments and contexts (positively or negatively) affect our thinking. The actor that prepares for a role of a young swimming champion might indeed

rehearse as he is swimming: feeling the soft feel of the water and her body's weightlessness might positively contribute to the development of the role. Other roles (take Richard III) might benefit from other contexts (e.g., an empty room with big mirrors hanging at the walls so the actor is confronted with his facial expressions and body language

Fesmire's second point is how deliberation is not only an individual-cognitive phase but also a social process that unfolds in dialogue and shared action. Housing preferences take shape by discussing the topic with others: your partner, friends, colleagues, and vendors. Or take, for our purposes a less prudentially and more morally relevant example. Tackling poverty is not something you do on your own but a collective enterprise where people work together to set up food distributions, find fundraisers, and organize neighborhood meetings.

11.6. Experimental Moral Creativity

Dewey's idea of imagination as dramatic rehearsal can be summarized as an essential, practically, and socially embedded phase of intelligent human action. Dewey was inspired by Hegelian Dialectics and Darwin's idea of adaptation and regards human beings as organisms that are in constant interaction with their environment, and so need imagination to overcome all kinds of obstacles that come up in that interaction. This Deweyan idea of moral imagination is strikingly different from Iris Murdoch's idea of imaginative apprehension I discussed before. Murdoch explains imagination as an explorative perception that aims for a better understanding of the things other than oneself while Dewey considers imagination as an experimental phase of action to intelligently adapt one's habits to the environment. In the last sections of this chapter, I will discuss how a Deweyan model of moral imagination matches with my idea of moral creativity.

Dewey's experimental idea of imagination applies to that aspect of creativity that is difficult to conceptualize in a Murdochian framework: an imagination-in-action searching for contextual improvement. The examples of artistic creativity and moral creativity I discussed in section 10.2 indeed resemble the working of an experimental imagination-in-action; a portrait that develops

through sketching with charcoal, Jeff who suddenly kisses his sister's violent boyfriend, the Jewish father and sons that connect with Fermor through a religious ritual.

Two authors have already referred to Dewey's conception of imagination in an explicit analysis of moral creativity. In his article on Feinberg's historical moral creativity (see part I, section 3.2), Martin proposes to compare Feinberg's creativity with engineering rather than invention and shortly mentions Dewey who, in his words, 'characterized intelligent and creative moral decision making by using technological metaphors of production and design, construction and reconstruction, tools and 'experimental engineering' (Martin 2006, p. 60)[44]. As far as I am aware, the most elaborate argument for a Deweyan-inspired conception of moral creativity is offered by Mark Coeckelbergh in a 2014 book chapter.[45] Coeckelbergh defends a conception of moral creativity as moral craftmanship. I will discuss his conception of moral craftmanship in part III. First, I will explain how Coeckelbergh contrasts Dewey's idea of moral imagination with another idea of imagination he discerns in the Platonic and modern tradition, and how he links the Deweyan variant to moral creativity.

Coeckelbergh frames the difference between the two ideas of moral imagination as a difference between designing a top-down moral theory on the one hand and experimentation on the other hand. He argues the first idea resembles Plato's philosopher-king who thinks up abstract ideas of the good which are then applied to reality. Coeckelbergh sees this idea of moral imagination reproduced by deontologists who propose 'moral and political rights and laws that should protect individuals' and utilitarian's (he mentions Bentham's utilitarianism and Singer's animal ethics) who 'start from a concept and a calculus, and then try to (re)design society'

[44] Martin refers to a recitation of Dewey's phrase coming from *Human Nature and Conduct* (Hickman, 1990, p. 111). However, Dewey himself does refer to engineering only a couple of times and uses the phrase 'experimental engineering' only once in *Human Nature and Conduct*.

(Coeckelbergh, 2014, p. 50) He admits that there is a difference between Plato's idea of *theoria* as 'vision' and the scientific model of modern theories, but he argues that both 'share the same approach to moral creativity: they think that such creativity is about *theoria*, about imagining and creating a blueprint of the human as moral (...) and as good, of the just society' (2014, p. 50).

Coeckelbergh mentions attempts that tried to balance this modern version by identifying an imaginative dimension in moral reasoning (he refers to Johnson and his own, previous essay (2007) on moral imagination). However, he problematizes that they still consider morality as a matter of reasoning:

> This kind of creativity and imagination still goes on "in my head", it has its origin in the cartesian subject that is disconnected from the world. It is still about seeing the good from a distance. The view that morality is more a matter of empathy and of feeling, perception, intuition, and moral vision was and is a welcome response to the rationalistic tendencies in modern thinking. However, emphasizing emotions, empathy, and intuition remains a modern response if and insofar as it presupposes a non-relational moral subject, one who is not engaged with the world, contemplating morality in the cartesian cocoon of his or her mind. In order to avoid concepts such as imagination or intuition being recuperated by the study-room model of moral thinking, they should be given a new role within a relational, non-Platonic, non-Cartesian, and non-Kantian view of morality and of knowledge. (2014, p. 52)

Instead, Coeckelbergh searches for another 'more practical kind' of creativity that emphasizes 'moral dancing, moral improvisation, moral engineering, and moral tinkering' (2014, p. 53). I think these kinds of characterizations indeed apply to moral creativity, that very often involves trial-and-error experimentation aimed at contextual improvement. Take the Christmas Truce. The testimonies describe these events not as a sophisticated well-prepared idea that was executed but indeed as a process of trial and error where things are tried out, often in agreement with (the outcome of) earlier actions. See for instance the following testimonies of Fritz Jung. Jung was a German Lieutenant who described how the truce unfolded near Warenton, a small Belgian village close to the French border:

> It was a beautiful night with a bright moon shining down. Light frost covered the ground. Only snow was missing in this near-perfect picture of Christmas Eve. But soon a proper Christmas spirit uninterrupted by the English fireworks spread through the trenches. The Jäger (Battalion, *my addition*) had brought along with them their own small Christmas trees which had been either mailed to them from home or had somehow been put together on site. The men decorated them, affixed some candles, lit and put them atop the parapet. Before too long one could see a furthermost distance and to the left of us, where the Bavarian Jäger were embedded, a whole line of lit trees, and further along the Saxon infantry had put up theirs. It was an unforgettable sight! (2021, p. 64)

Jung writes about the events that took place on the German side before the real fraternization between the two sides took place. The German legions received Christmas gifts from their families and the German state which encouraged them to recreate a Christmas-like atmosphere in the trenches. The sight of the lit trees atop the parapet was impressive not only for the German soldiers but for the English soldiers at the other side as well. Jung tells how they, fascinated by the beautiful scene, were the first to seek rapprochement in this case:

> Tommy arrived but not with hostile intentions. Their mission was of an entirely friendly nature. From afar – we lay opposite each other at a distance of some 400 meters – we could already hear loud shouts in German that were echoing through the night: "Comrade, don't shoot", followed by the words, "We are your friends." Our lit trees with the many candles must have moved them to such an extent that they simply ran out of their trenches. (2021, p. 70)

The English soldiers see the lights at the other side and try something. They shout a few German expressions and eventually, there is a soldier that dares to jump over the parapet and moves towards the German side. These actions come as unexpected for Jung's battalion, who did not aim for fraternization. The first German reaction is one of panic:

> Our Captain didn't know what to do with himself, pacing through the trenches like a madman. He was firmly convinced that we

> would be ambushed just as he had always feared we would be and thought that the many shouts he heard were nothing but a trick. We too, it has to be said, were feeling rather strange. We were prepared for anything and everything; The captain immediately gave orders to shoot. Light flares rose to the sky and bullets whizzed across the field in the direction of Tommy. (2021, p. 70)

In that moment of blind panic, the Germans start to shoot haphazardly in the direction of the unfortunate Englishman. But soon they notice that there is no shooting back. On the contrary, the English soldiers continue to call on the Germans, at which point a German soldier decides to venture out and enter No Man's land, after which others follow:

> But when the shouting didn't cease, in fact only grew louder, the shooting petered out and then stopped altogether. Our bullets had caused no damage. Without further ado Oberjäger Echte from the 1st Company jumped over the parapet and dashed across to the wire fence to see what in fact was going on. Much to his surprise he could see that a whole group of Englishmen had arrived, all of them unarmed. At that point several more men from our side plucked up their courage and joined in. We shook each other's hands, everything was very friendly, and we started chatting, since Oberjager Echte speaks fluent English. At that gathering we also exchanged gifts. The English presented us with throw knives, tobacco, and our Oberjäger even got a short pipe. Meanwhile we Germans gave them cigarettes. (2021, p. 70)

The events described by Jung correspond to Coeckelbergh's Deweyan idea of moral creativity as an experimental process that involves tinkering, improvisation, and reaction. Moral creativity– like artistic or scientific creativity – happens to be experimental through and through. The moral creativity here is not to be identified with one specific moment but can at best be characterized as a series of experimental imagination-in-action, where individuals and groups try things out by which they aim to bring contextual change and improvement.

This experimental conception of moral imagination seems difficult to grasp by Murdoch's model of imaginative apprehension. However, this does not mean that a Murdochian conception should be identified with what Coeckelbergh refers to as a 'study room'

model of imagination. Murdoch actively resists the picture of morality as applying abstract, theoretical concepts with her conception of moral perception as the imaginative apprehension of reality. Her ideal is not that of the philosopher-king but of someone standing with both feet on the ground who is prepared to adjust her view of reality to arrive at a deeper understanding. The difference between Murdoch and Dewey is not one of theory versus practice, but one of exploration versus experimentation. Murdoch's theory would fit the other middle position that Coeckelbergh distinguishes, where imagination is restricted to contemplation in 'the cartesian cocoon' of the mind (Coeckelbergh, 2014, p. 52). Indeed, Murdoch uses Plato's contemplative, imaginative model for her moral thinking, in which you imaginatively apprehend reality and try to perfect this apprehension to arrive at a better representation of what situations entail, who others are, and what they need. The difference between Murdoch and Dewey must be understood as a difference between the emphasis on perception and an emphasis on overt action that produces two distinct conceptions of moral imagination: Murdoch's model is that of a contemplative, exploratory imaginative apprehension of the world, while Dewey sees moral imagination as an experimental stage of human action.

Both Murdoch and Dewey offer a radical perspective on morality by bringing one element of our moral lives into the foreground. Murdoch emphasizes the inner, contemplative part of moral life while Dewey starts from a very different pragmatic focus on action. They are two authors rarely brought together exactly because of their theories' different centers of gravity. Work on moral imagination tends to either follow one author's lead or juxtapose them.[46] However, I think Murdoch and Dewey describe two moral uses of imagination that can be brought together in an analysis of the morally creative process. Both the explorative apprehension of reality and the experimental reconstruction of action can have a role in creative innovative contextual change and improvement. Murdoch shows how moral improvement often starts from within by exploring reality through imaginative

[46] For authors that build on a Murdochian model of imagination, see Chappell, 2017, Diamond, 1991, Nussbaum, 1985. For authors building on a Deweyan model, see Alexander, 1990, 1993; Fesmire, 2003; Johnson, 2016. For work juxtaposing the two, see Coeckelbergh, 2007; Biss, 2014.

apprehension and Dewey demonstrates how improvement is often an experimental process of reconstructing action. As stated in section 10.2., I consider creativity as imagination *in* action. What is interesting about combining a Murdochian and a Deweyan framework is that they both question the relationship between imagination and action. Dewey does so by arguing that imagination is a phase of action while Murdoch argues the other way around that action starts in imagination. The thesis that creativity is imagination in action is thus reconcilable with both a Murdochian and a Deweyan framework that respectively put forward an inner and an overt model of action. In the next section, I will further elaborate on the relationship between Murdoch and Dewey to show that their theories reveal different aspects of the morally creative process.

Summary of part II

In Part II, I discussed the role of imagination in moral creativity by discussing two models of moral imagination: Iris Murdoch's imaginative apprehension of reality and John Dewey's imaginative reconstruction of action. I started by unpacking Murdoch's philosophical project. Murdoch stresses the existence and importance of an inner moral activity that she refers to as attention and love. I argued how Murdoch presents a theory of moral perception as imaginative apprehension. I focused on the omnipresent role of imagination Murdoch sees in moral thought by discussing her views on metaphors, concepts, and her distinction between imagination and fantasy. I showed how authors such as Nussbaum, Diamond, and Johnson share Murdoch's idea of the crucial role of imagination in the apprehension of reality. After unpacking the Murdochian model of imaginative apprehension, I considered and rebutted two possible criticisms of this model, (i.e., that imagination would distract us from reality and that it would be morally dangerous). I then considered Murdoch's theory of 'creative' imaginative apprehension in relation to contextually innovative creativity. I granted that imaginative apprehension plays a role in the morally creative process by exploring the possibilities of a situation but that this model focuses too much on inner acts, and so overlooks the importance of overt acts in moral creativity. I introduced several examples of artistic and moral creativity that indeed confirm the crucial role of overt acts in creativity. However, I argued that such acts must not be seen as the practical translation of ideas, but as the continuation of the imagination in another medium. I summarized this position with the idea that creativity is not imagination plus action but imagination in action.

At this point I turned to Dewey's pragmatic theory of moral imagination. Dewey considers imagination as a phase of action rather than an element of our reflective thinking that is isolated from embodied action. I first emphasized how Dewey sees human action as the result of the interpenetration of different habits and how Dewey sees habits not as automatic actions but as patterns of action that we can intelligently revise. I showed how Dewey sees a pivotal role for imagination in the revision and adaption of habits. I

described Dewey's idea of dramatic rehearsal as a widening of experience where that can include different elements. I then turned to Fesmire's emphasis on the social and practical dimension of Dewey's theory: dramatic rehearsal is no matter of contemplative soliloquy but an enacted, socially embedded process. After unpacking Dewey's theory of moral imagination, I discussed Coeckelbergh's Deweyan account of moral creativity as an experimental process building on practical use of the imagination, which is confirmed by testimonies that depict the Christmas truce as an experimental process of trial and error. I concluded this part by arguing that a Murdochian and Deweyan conception of moral imagination are reconcilable in an analysis of contextually innovative creativity as imagination-in-action.

III. Moral Creativity, Moral Experience, and Perfection

In part II, I focused on the role of imagination in moral creativity. I focused on two influential models of moral imagination: Iris Murdoch's model of moral perception as imaginative apprehension and Dewey's model of dramatic rehearsal as the reconstruction of action. Murdoch and Dewey presented a radical perspective on morality by emphasizing either perception or action.

In part III, I aim to further engage the thought of these thinkers in a reflection on contextually innovative moral creativity. The goal here is not to defend one framework against the other but to show how both thinkers highlight different aspects that serve a deeper understanding of moral creativity. This part focuses on the role of experience and progress in Murdoch's and Dewey's moral theory in relation to moral creativity. Both were deeply motivated to do philosophy in a way that reflects our actual lives and can help us to achieve moral progress. Despite a different center of gravity (perception vs. action) and a different metaphysical framework, I regard both thinkers as allies in the search for a realistic moral philosophy that one could live by.

12. Two Strands of Moral Reality

Before discussing some less obvious points of contact between Murdoch and Dewey, I should address the outspoken difference between their metaphysical frameworks.

Dewey's project can be read as a radical pragmatic critique of classic metaphysics. Dewey's pragmatism objected classic metaphysics and its typically dualistic way of looking at reality (e.g., mind/body, nature/culture, reason/emotion, self/society, etc.). Dewey's main inspiration was Darwin's evolutionary theory of adaptation; he considers humans as 'interdependent organisms-in-environments' (Hildebrand, 2018). Dewey refers to human habits and experience resulting from such interaction and avoids references to any deeper foundation or metaphysical reality. If one can speak of metaphysics in Dewey's work, it is a 'realist, naturalistic, non-reductive, emergentist, process metaphysics' (Hildebrand, 2018). Murdoch starts from a very different position. She complains of the 20th-century logical-positivist tendencies that have eroded the idea of moral reality and moral knowledge. While Dewey was convinced that philosophy (including ethics) should stick to our embodied, historical reality of organisms-in-environments, Murdoch distinguishes another metaphysical moral reality.[47] In contrast to Dewey's experimentalist pragmatism, Murdoch discussed the existence of what she calls the Good.

Murdoch's idea of the Good is a complex notion. I do not have the ambition here to explain this idea in full depth. Instead I shall demonstrate how her idea of imaginative apprehension of concrete moral reality relates to the Good. First, Murdoch considers the Good as a moral reality that we see resembled in other particular objects of reality (persons, events, situations, artworks, etc.). Second, she portrays it as a regulative ideal to which we turn in our apprehension of reality. I will discuss the status of the Good as a moral reality here, I will come back to the status as a moral ideal in section 14.1. For Murdoch, the Good is a reality but one that is not fully comprehensible. Murdoch calls the Good a transcendent reality, not because it is not part of our world, but because we never

[47] Hence the title of her last philosophy work: *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*.

reach full understanding of its reality. She distinguishes her understanding of transcendence from a 'false transcendence' she traces back in the Anglo-American ethics of her time inspired by logical positivism. Murdoch explains how such theories exclude value from 'the world of science and factual propositions' and therefore conclude that 'it is (…) attached somehow to the human will' (2001, p. 57). However, Murdoch argues, if 'good' is identified with the working of our will, and not as something that we can somehow trace back in world, then we end up into what she calls the 'dreary moral solipsism' that attributes moral value to (one element of) the self; a purified, good will to which all moral value is attributed. Murdoch adopts Plato's comparison of the Good to the sun to explain her idea of the Good:

> We can certainly know more or less where the sun is; it is not so easy to imagine what it would be like to look at it. Perhaps indeed only the good man knows what this is like; or perhaps to look at the sun is to be gloriously dazzled and to see nothing. What does seem to make perfect sense in the Platonic myth is the idea of the Good as the source of light which reveals to us all things as they really are. (Murdoch, 2001, p. 68)

Just as we can have an indirect idea of what the sun looks like because we cannot see into it (but we see its light that shines on stones, and trees, and houses) we can only have an indirect idea of the Good by looking at particular realities according to Murdoch. The Good is for Murdoch a reality of which our comprehension falls short, but of which our limited understanding is 'constantly refined on what one sees out there' (Panizza, 2020, p. 280). Murdoch holds a multifarious idea of moral reality. On the one hand, moral reality is for Murdoch the Plato-inspired idea of the Good. On the other hand, Murdoch refers to the particular objects that surround us as moral reality (persons in the first place, but also art, situations, events, and other things). Murdoch scholars have pointed out the importance of both 'strands' of moral reality in Murdoch's work. (The notion of 'strands' comes from Blum, 2023)

Despite Plato's influence on Murdoch's work, the relationship between these two kinds of reality is not hierarchical. Love for particular objects of reality is no mere stepping stone for our love for the Good. Such a limitation of Murdoch's theory of moral

knowledge to Platonic ascension contrasts with the importance she attaches to (loving) particular things. Her references to the Good are accompanied by 'an equal number of references to love for particular objects: Murdoch talks about people loving 'their work, a book, a potted plant, a formation of clouds' and invokes the example of 'the mother loving the retarded child or loving the tiresome elderly relation' (Hopwood, 2017, p. 485). The (knowledge of) particular reality surrounding us is central to Murdoch's philosophy. Her example of M and D must not be read as a 'field study' to confirm the metaphysical reality of the Good, but as an example of what is at stake in our daily moral lives: knowing others as they are. Hopwood summarizes Murdoch's position by stating that 'we love particular individuals in light of the Good, and we love the Good through particular individuals' (2017, p. 486). The Good is for Murdoch a strand of moral reality, and its presence is revealed through concrete objects of reality. However, it is not a 'label we apply to persons, actions, events, or things according to our choices or preferences. Rather, the Good is – in the Platonic image of the Sun that has dominated Murdoch's ethics – the light in which human moral existence is lived and evaluations and choices are made' (Antonaccio & Schweiker, 1996, p. xvii).

The mystical notion of Good is central to Murdoch's work. It is very different from Dewey's naturalist framework that resists any strand of moral reality different from the embodied, historical and transactional reality we live in. Therefore, I think it is quite unattainable to 'reconcile' a Deweyan with a Murdochian metaphysics. We should acknowledge an unbridgeable distance between Murdoch and Dewey's metaphysics. Yet, I think abridgment on a metaphysical level is not necessary for this project. My focus is a moral phenomenon, moral creativity, and not the reconciliation of two philosophical paradigms in their totality. While I think Dewey and Murdoch's metaphysical presuppositions are too far from each other to reconcile reasonably, their philosophical projects both emphasize the importance of experience and experiential knowledge.

13. A Murdochian and Deweyan Focus on Moral Experience

> In ethics too, experience comes first, in the strict sense that the foundation of ethical thought – insofar as it has any one foundation – lies in the paradigm events of life, and hence not in definitions or other forms of words, but in the ostension and imaginative exploration of phenomenal contents.
>
> Chappell, 2017, p. 250

Both Murdoch and Dewey work with a broad notion of morality. Dewey said that 'potentially every and any act is within the scope of morals, being a candidate for possible judgment with respect to its better-or-worse quality' (2002, p. 279). Dewey sees human life as an ever-ongoing process of intelligently adapting habits. He considers every moment we are confronted with hindrance morally relevant, as we make choices about the course of our lives. Murdoch, who connects morality primarily to the way we perceive the world, argues that 'the area of morals, and ergo of moral philosophy 'covers' the whole of our mode of living and the quality of our relations with the world' (2001, p. 95). For Murdoch, every and any act can be potentially in the scope of morals not because it is a candidate for moral judgment but because it can show a good relation with the world: 'it is so patently a good thing to take delight in flowers and animals that people who bring home potted plants and watch kestrels might even be surprised at the notion that these things have anything to do with virtue' (2001, p. 83).

Their ideas of the pervasiveness of the moral reflect the different center of gravity of their moral theory. For Dewey, morality essentially concerns the intelligent reconstruction of action, while for Murdoch, morality is about our relation to reality. However, both see these matters as a process in which experience and experiential knowledge are central. The exploration of one's apprehension of reality and the intelligent reconstruction of actions is a process that involves looking back again and again at that what is different from ourselves (Murdoch) and evaluating and

reconstructing actions based on their imaginative and experimental testing (Dewey).

In Murdoch's work, understood through the lens of her perceptual metaphor, experience is a kind of perceptual experience of the world beyond oneself. Dewey, on the other hand, 'preferred metaphors of understanding as manipulation over the more Platonic ones of vision' (Fesmire, 2003, p. 84). Fesmire cites Herbert Schneider, who reported how Dewey during a dinner party declared that 'this whole problem of understanding should be approached not from the point of view of the eyes, but from the point of view of the hands. It's what we grasp that matters' (Schneider, 1959, p. 95, as cited in Fesmire 2003, p. 84). Dewey's central notion of habit seems to reveal a notion of experience as 'acquired experience': experience as 'know-how,' or 'skill'. Moral experience is then considered something you develop during action. However, Dewey's idea of experience, is more complicated than this idea of experience as acquired experience. Dewey's notion of experience as 'doing and undergoing' discloses the transactional nature of human experience. Thomas Alexander argues how a Deweyan conception of experience should be understood as 'both process and field – a "field-process", if you will' (Alexander, 1987, p. 128, as cited in Fesmire 2003, p. 80). For Dewey, our actions are always historically and culturally but also socially constituted: we act in interaction with the environment and others Experience is thus not just a process enacted by ourselves but something that comes about transactionally and that is socially embedded.

Murdoch and Dewey's ideas of experience are different since they are embedded in a theory that respectively focuses on perceptual knowledge and experimental action. Murdoch's notion of moral experience concerns the perception of something other than oneself, while Dewey sees experience as a process that is socially embedded. I think these notions can reveal two significant aspects of how contextually innovative moral creativity unfolds in relation to its context. First, creative processes do not only depend on the implementation of valuable ideas and the realization of valuable acts but rely on evaluative experience of particular objects of reality relevant in that context. Second, such creative processes are socially embedded and often develop collectively.

13.1. Obedience to Reality

When we, the grown-ups, are tired
Of talking
Of talking
Of talking with each other
We go into the garden and conceal ourselves
In the cat, in the grass, in the child[48]

Leonard Nolens, *Tiredness*

I explained how Murdoch emphasizes the inner activity of attention to the things surrounding us. The fact that Murdoch emphasizes an inner variant of moral action does not mean that her thinking is solipsistic. She wants to fight egocentrism and fantasy that cuts us off from those other realities; the very reason for displaying this inner act is that *there are* other things than ourselves that deserve our attention. I think Murdoch's emphasis on what she calls 'obedience to reality' (2001, p. 41) affects the way we think about moral creativity: her emphasis on the things surrounding us makes us realize moral creativity does not only concern the realization of contextual improvement but evaluative experience of reality different than oneself as well.

Chappell focuses in her recent work on this aspect of Murdoch's philosophy. In her 2014 (I use the 2017 edition) book *Knowing What To Do*, Chappell develops a theory of moral imagination and what she calls a Platonistic virtue ethics that is heavily inspired by Murdoch's idea of moral perception as imaginative apprehension of reality. Chappell promotes an imaginative style of thinking – both in our moral life and moral philosophy – that concentrates on the acquisition of 'objectual knowledge' of the things that surround us. She argues this requires 'humility, patience, persistence, imagination, and resourcefulness from the inquirer' (2017, p. 288). In her 2022 book *Epiphanies*, Chappell shifts the weight from our inner moral efforts to the power those other objects of moral reality exert on us. One of the central arguments in *Epiphanies* is that our experiences of those objects are

[48] My translation of a fragment of the Belgian poet Leonard Nolens' poem 'Tiredness'.

evaluative experiences, and that the most intense and immediate form of such experiences are epiphanies:

> We experience the reality of value constantly, just in experiencing anything at all. And there *is* no experience, prior to this value-laden experience, of a world without value (…) our experience of each other, and of the world that we inhabit together, is, primordially and pervasively, a continuum of experience of things as mattering, as having importance and value. One way of understanding many of the experiences that I am calling epiphanies is to say that they are simply the regions of that continuum where this experience of things-as-mattering is at its most vivid, intensive, and immediate. (Chappell, 2022, p. 61)[49]

Chappell follows Murdoch's rejection of the fact-value distinction in her writings on epiphanies, which she characterizes as the 'peaks' of our experiences. Chappell thinks that epiphanies are part of all sorts of experiences – and thus moral experiences. What they all have in common is our attention that is suddenly being drawn to the value of something other than oneself. Murdoch herself has a well-known example of such a sudden, intense experience of value. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, Murdoch describes how a flying kestrel suddenly draws her attention away from personal worries:

> I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (Murdoch, 2001, p. 82)

For Murdoch, this moment is morally significant because the sudden focus on the hovering kestrel frees us from self-centered worries. Suddenly she realizes that there are other things than her prestige, but that there is still a whole world outside us that deserves recognition. Who has not experienced such moments, being confronted with the graceful flight of a kestrel, the depth of a

[49] In this section, I paraphrase some points I made in an article on Chappell's *Epiphanies* (Ratajczyk, 2023).

painting, the pure joy of children playing outside, or the splendor of a lonely tree in a landscape? Chappell offers dozens of other examples in her work. One that is 'clearly' moral, is an anecdote about the writer C.S. Lewis, written down by his brother:

> One summer day he heard it mentioned casually that there was a sick man in a field some distance away. Jack said "Poor devil" and continued to write; then he suddenly jumped up in distress and said "I have sinned; I have showed myself lacking in all charity." Out he went, found the man, brought him to the house, gave him a drink, heard his story, and then – being satisfied that the man was able to look after himself – saw him off, not (I am sure) forgetting the Samaritan's twopence. (Lewis, 1966, p. 41, as cited in Chappell, 2022, p. 125)

The two examples – Murdoch's hovering kestrel and Lewis' sudden realization of the neediness and dignity of another human being – are somewhat different in character but they both seem to correspond to an intense, vivid, evaluative experience Chappell calls an epiphany. Chappell characterizes an epiphany as '(1) an overwhelming (2) existentially significant manifestation of (3) value, (4) often sudden and surprising, (5) which feeds the psyche, (6) which feels like it 'comes from outside'—it is something given, relative to which I am a passive perceiver—(7) which teaches us something new, which (8) takes us 'out of ourselves', and which (9) demands a response.' (2020, p. 11). As I explained before (see Part I, chapter 5), Chappell considers 'epiphany' as a focal-case concept that refers to a wide range of different phenomena. So-called focal cases answer to all nine aspects, while others do not tick all the boxes. For example, the two cases I cited here differ in terms of the demanded response (9). Lewis' sudden revelation entails a clear call to action that Murdoch's confrontation with the kestrel seems to lack. Furthermore, one might doubt whether Lewis' epiphany feeds the psyche in a similar way than the aesthetically beautiful sight of a lonesome, hovering kestrel.

However, both examples clearly have in common the sudden character of the experience we could refer to with terms such as 'illumination', 'revelation' or, indeed, 'epiphany'. This reminds of a type of experience often linked to the creative process: the so-called 'wow' or 'a-ha' moment frequently described in testimonies or

reflections of creativity. Such a moment was already recognized by Graham Wallas' influential four-stage model of creativity. Wallas was one of the first psychologists who described creativity as a process of several stages. In his pioneering work *Art of Thought* (1926), he distinguished between the preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification phase. He based this model on the self-reports of physicist Hermann Von Helmholtz and the mathematician Henri Poincaré on solving scientific challenges (Helmholtz, 1896; Poincaré, 1908). The preparation stage is seen as the first stage of a creative process, where one plays around with different thoughts, ideas, and strategies. After this tinkering around follows a phase of incubation, where the conscious activity of searching and researching is paused. During incubation, the active mind is given some rest until, at some point, the incubation stage gets suddenly interrupted. A specific idea breaks through the veil of the unconscious and is brought from the backstage to the frontstage of our mind, so to speak. Poincaré describes such moments in his *Science et Méthode*:

> Just at this time I left Caen, where I was then living, to go on a geological excursion under the auspices of the school of mines. The changes of travel made me forget my mathematical work. Having reached Coutances, we entered an omnibus to go some place or other. At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it, that the transformations I had used to define the Fuchsian functions were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry. I did not verify the idea; I should not have had time, as, upon taking my seat in the omnibus, I went on with a conversation already commenced, but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience' sake I verified the result at my leisure. Then I turned my attention to the study of some arithmetic questions apparently without much success and without a suspicion of any connection with my preceding researches. Disgusted with my failure, I went to spend a few days at the seaside, and thought of something else. One morning, walking on the bluff, the idea came to me, with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness and immediate certainty, that the arithmetic transformations of indeterminate ternary quadratic forms were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry. (Poincaré, 2000, p. 89)

Creativity research commonly explains illumination as a moment where unconscious connections rise to the surface of consciousness and so offer a helpful way to solve a problem. Notice the difference between this idea of illumination and Chappell's idea of epiphany. Illumination in creativity is explained as something floating from the bottom to the surface: one suddenly becomes conscious of ideas that have been developing unconsciously. The examples of Chappell and Murdoch, however, are about a sudden, evaluative experience of something that exists apart from oneself: the graceful kestrel and the man in need. Those things *are already there*.

This is why Chappell insists on the importance of receptivity in moral life. She agrees with Murdoc's idea of attention in her work, but she questions how Murdoch and Weil, despite 'their otherwise admirable insistence on the ethical centrality of our inner life and in particular of contemplative receptivity, tended to see this receptiveness as an *activity*: the activity of attention' (2022, p. 112). Chappell reacts to this model of attention as an inner activity by agreeing that 'the *basic* relationship between us and the values is a passive one' (2022, p. 112):

> Values are *encountered*. We might almost say we bump into them. They come to us from outside, like tables and trees and tax-invoices, they are 'just there', waiting for us to notice or apprehend them. As with tables, trees, and tax-invoices, we don't *construct* values, or *infer* them from other, more basic or immediate objects of experience. We experience the values themselves, directly. (2022, p. 112)

This reads as quite a strong claim. Is there not, to use Chappell's analogy a way in which we construct value, just as there is a way in which we not only encounter but 'construct' tables and tax invoices, just as we construct bookcases and testaments?[50] This claim seems to contrast with moral creativity, that I so far have explained *as* the

[50] This is easy to see in the case of human artifacts as tables, tax invoices, bookcases and testaments. Trees are a less obvious example of value construction. Yet there may be a sense in which we 'construct' trees, such as when urban planners decide to incorporate tree beds into paved public areas to allow trees to grow in an urban environment where they would never grow under normal circumstances.

realization of valuable acts, as contextual improvement. By itself, the quotation above reads like an outright rejection of creative value construction, but I think it misrepresents Chappell's overall position in *Epiphanies*. Her main point, I believe, is that inner activity must be balanced with inner receptivity. Later, Chappell nuances and stresses she does not 'deny that attention *is* activity, and indeed work – hard work'. Rather, she doubts that 'activity is *all* it is' (2022, p. 233). Chappell thinks that, eventually, 'the point of the activity that attention involves is to get us into a position to be passive and receptive' (2022, p. 233). I think she makes the valid point that our moral lives benefit from moments where we try to be receptive to what is outside us. However, I think it is key not to understand receptivity in mere passive terms and to contrast this receptivity with (inner or overt) activity, as Chappell sometimes tends to do.

13.2. Passivity and Activity

Both Murdoch and Dewey challenge such a clear-cut contract between passivity and activity. Diamond argues how Murdoch rejected a 'dualism of active and passive elements in the soul':

> What we are confronted with, in an apparently passive sort of way, in any actual case, may reflect earlier activity; thus, e.g., my now having, quite unreflectively, an inclination to do such-and-such for someone might come from my having earlier tried to see that person as someone genuinely independent of me and my needs. (Diamond, 2010, p. 80)

It is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between activity and passivity in a Murdochian framework. On the hand, as I mentioned before, Murdoch clearly states that 'the world which we confront is not just a world of "facts", but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked' (1966, p. 49). At the same time, Murdoch emphasizes 'obedience to reality' is needed to realize that something other than oneself is real. However, Murdoch thinks such obedience – 'the realization that something else than oneself is real' - is only possible because we succeed in transforming fantastical images into imaginative reality-affirming ones. I think Murdoch's idea of obedience to reality, which Chappell refers to as 'value encounter', should not be characterized in terms of passivity. After

stating that 'there is a balance to be observed, in doing ethics, between the active and the passive', she compares this with the balance between 'detachment and engagement' (2022, p. 234). I think the last term – engagement – is closer to the attitude Murdoch describes as obedience to reality: the attitude to engage with the real in its particularity rather than to flee in the illusions of the self or factual, value-free descriptions of reality.

Just as the contrast between passive and active does not reflect the difference between value encounter and value construction, this contrast is unhelpful in distinguishing Murdoch and Dewey. It is not that Murdoch holds a passive and Dewey an active theory of the moral imagination. Just like Murdoch, Dewey tends to reject a distinction between passivity and activity in his characterization of dramatic rehearsal as a phase of action and human experience as a process of doing and undergoing. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey explicitly argues that 'receptivity is not passivity. It, too, is a process of consisting of a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfilment. Otherwise, there is not perception but recognition' (2005, p. 54). For Dewey, perception cannot something devoid of action. He considers it 'an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy' and argues that 'when we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take in*' (2005, p. 55).

The main difference in their thinking of moral experience has, as I suggested earlier, to do with their theories having another center of gravity. Murdoch starts from reality while Dewey's philosophy starts from an interaction with that reality. Since this focus on reality as that what surrounds us, she considers experience foremost as experience of reality and stresses something like obedience to reality. As I explained such obedience to reality as the attitude to engage with the real, I think this is recognition in the strong sense of the word: an appreciation of the particularity of what surrounds us.

Murdoch's idea of obedience to reality and Chappell's idea of value recognition emphasize value recognition and appreciation, rather than the creation of value in moral life. I believe this emphasis reveals something important about moral creativity. It shows us that moral creativity does not only entail the realization of valuable acts

and products, but also the evaluative appreciation of concrete objects of reality, which I will refer to as 'value appreciation' in next section.

13.3. Value Appreciation

Creativity should not be characterized only in terms of executive success (value creation) but also in terms of openness and receptiveness (value recognition and appreciation). We observe this aspect in the practice of creative artists. Novelists, painters, and musicians are receptive to and show appreciation for their surroundings, the things and people that surround them, the medium and material with which they work, and so on. We see such receptiveness and appreciation in the following passages of Patti Smith's book *Devotion*. She describes how she is walking in a Parisian park in between meetings and remembers the time when she was there with her sister half a century ago:

> I enter the small park adjacent to the church with Picasso's bust of Apollinaire at the entrance. I sit on the same bench where I had sat with my sister in the spring of 1969. We were in our early twenties, when everything, including the sentimental head of the poet, was a revelation. Inquisitive sisters with a handful of precious addresses of cafés and hotels. The Deux Magots of the existentialists. The Hôtel des Etrangers, where Rimbaud and Verlaine presided over the Circle Zutique. The Hôtel de Lauzun with its chimeras and gilded halls where Baudelaire smoked hashish and penned the opening poems in *Les fleurs du mal*. The interior of our imaginations glowed, as we walked back and forth before the places synonymous with poets. Just to be near where they had written, sparred and slept.' (2017, p. 11)

Smith often writes about her daily life: visits to friends, writing in coffee bars, travel, and memorable encounters (see also *Just Kids, M-train*, *Year of the Monkey*). A typical feature of her lively prose is the general sense of wonder and sensitivity it reveals. Smith shows a deep appreciation for the particularity of other people, good books, beautiful objects, etc. This appreciation shows in the foregoing fragment as well. Smith's openness to her surroundings is everything but passive. One can mindlessly walk past buildings and see them

merely as part of the city, paying no further attention to them. Smith walks through Paris in a very different way. When she walks past the buildings, she is open to their beauty, history and literary significance. In part II, I have argued how imaginative apprehensions are a part of the way we perceive the world. The point I am making here is that a sensitivity to the value-ladenness of the world - to other people but also buildings, nature, artworks, or even whole cities – influences our imaginative apprehensions. Smith's appreciation for the beauty and history of her surroundings makes the interior of her imagination glow more easily, to use her expression. It is such appreciation and succeeding apprehensions that are typical of Smith's prose, I would say.

I believe the value appreciation that is significant in Smith's writing is also significant in a process of moral creativity. Value appreciation seems to be a typical aspect of the morally creative process that unfolds in examples I discussed before. Take the example of Mandela's negotiations with Viljoen. It would be incorrect to consider Mandela's welcoming of Viljoen merely as a tactic. He is not just seducing Viljoen with nice words. Rather, Mandela approaches and appreciates Viljoen as a fellow citizen, someone with certain dreams and visions concerning his country, someone who deserves dignity. John Carlin, one of Mandela's biographers who discussed his relationship with Viljoen, said about Mandela he 'chose to see good in people who ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have judged to have been beyond redemption' (Carlin, 2009, p. 252, as cited in Bregman, 2021, p. 362). When Viljoen declared to Carlin that 'Mandela wins over all who meet him,' we should not read this as 'overcoming' but rather as winning someone's heart. Viljoen felt he counted as a person and not just as a political opponent in the eyes of Mandela. Moral creativity typically includes such value appreciation. Take the example of the Christmas truce, where soldiers show appreciation for the soldiers of the other side being humans:

> It was miraculous! These were Englishmen, English soldiers of whose existence we only knew based on their iron-wrapped missives, and now, here we were face-to-face. The two of us who had been lying opposite each other gun in hand were now waving to each other, exchanging gifts as if we had been friends, brothers even! Well, indeed, isn't that precisely what we were! At that

> moment we were friends, no longer German and English – we were human beings! (Rupert Frey, n.d., as cited in Richards, 202, p. 92)

Here we see the type of epiphanic illumination Chappell highlights in her work. This moment is no missing piece of a puzzle that comes to mind after thinking about a problem, but a moment of sudden value appreciation. Frey suddenly realizes that the Englishmen are young men who should be celebrating Christmas with their families, had they not been caught up in this horrible warfare. Such moments exemplify a significant aspect of moral creativity that does not completely fit with the classic idea of personal a-ha moment as the valuable moment when a creative idea emerges. These moments are moments of value recognition or appreciation, where the value of something other than oneself is recognized and appreciated. Such moments point at a significant evaluative aspect of creativity and moral creativity. Moral creativity seeks to bring contextually innovative improvement, but it does so in a particular context. A Murdochian emphasis on the experience of something other than oneself suggests how creative processes in general and morally creative processes in particular benefit from recognizing and appreciating the particular reality of that context.

13.4. Value Appreciation and Dark Creativity

Murdoch and Chappell's emphasis on obedience to reality and value encounter reveal the role of value appreciation in moral creativity. The contextual change or improvement moral creativity aims for benefits from appreciation for the particularity of others and situations, just as the expression of artistic creativity benefits from an appreciation for the materials one works with or the medium or environment one works in.

The examples I discussed above are clear examples of what Murdoch calls obedience to reality and they answer to Murdoch's core example of what she refers to as 'reality': other persons. However, as I argued before, 'reality' in Murdoch's approach should be broadly understood. Reality concerns other people, but also situations, events, natural environments, animals, and so forth.
The fact that 'reality' can be interpreted so broadly makes that the appreciations for some objects of reality can get in the way of or jar

with appreciation for others. Remember the example of the climate activists who threw tomato soup at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* to draw attention to the UK's fossil fuel policy. I argued that the value of this creative act is prone to discussion. One might say that the activists acknowledge the problem of climate change but that they are, at the same time, insensitive to the reality of art or art infrastructure. In terms of value appreciation, one might criticize their actions as they succeed in appreciating one object of reality but fail to appreciate another. Climate activists, however, might view the climate crisis as a reality so great it overshadows other realities.

Which reality outweighs the others? Which one should we focus on? These are the ethical questions at the heart of the debate about this kind of activist actions. Such questions are difficult to settle in a Murdochian framework. Murdoch does not give a more specific answer than her notions of imagination, perfection, and obedience to reality. She offers us 'an image that should be thought of as a general background to morals and not as a formula which can be illuminatingly introduced into any and every moral act' (2001, p. 41). 'Obedience to reality' is no formula or standard for deciding which creativity is morally valuable and which is not. But I do believe that such image can be a guideline to compare different examples. For example, it gives a good idea of what goes wrong in concrete cases of dark creativity, compared to cases of moral creativity.

In part I, I addressed the case of malevolent or dark creativity in my discussion of the value aspect of creativity: some creativity, as the inventiveness of the 9/11 terrorists, aims at morally wrong goals. I was critical of Hills and Bird's approach to treat creativity as mere novelty in response to those cases of dark creativity, but I expressed sympathy for the societal concern their argument seems to stem from (see part I, section 4.2.). Dark creativity exists and will continue to exist, but of course, we prefer a society where creativity is manifested in other ways rather than terrorism, necrophilia, or other harmful practices. I think a Murdochian emphasis on value appreciation offers, however, another angle to show what is wrong in cases of dark creativity (and thus another position to oppose it from). Not only are creative abilities used for the wrong purpose, but this creativity seems to lack appreciation for reality (which shows in ego-centric imagination that Murdoch calls fantasy).

Immoral creativity does not include an 'obedience' to reality as Murdoch calls it. Terrorists might believe in the fantastical value of becoming a terrorist, but their terroristic fantasies depict other people as mere objects worth scarifying. With the knowledge that dark creativity lacks something that typically is part of moral creativity – what Murdoch summarizes as obedience to reality – the societal problem of moral creativity will not disappear. However, we have another way to see what goes wrong there, as its central evaluation relies on a dismissive or misguided perception of a reality other than oneself.

13.5. Social Practice as Entry to the Creative Process.

> We can recognize that all conduct is interaction between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social. Then we shall see that progress proceeds in two ways, and that freedom is found in that kind of interaction which maintains an environment in which human desire and choice count for something.
>
> Dewey, 2002, p. 110

An important difference between Murdoch and Dewey is the social and societal dimension that is central to Dewey's work. It would be wrong to understand Dewey as promoting individual self-realization as the highest good. Instead, Fesmire (2003, p. 101) reminds us that Dewey stresses the social nature of experience and aims to reconcile the liberation of individuals with the promotion of a common good (Dewey 1985, 349) in his idea of the perpetual re-creation of a 'freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute' (Dewey 1988, p. 230, as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p. 101). Dewey attaches great importance to democracy, but and write in *Democracy and Education* that he considers democracy not as a 'form of government' but as 'a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' (2015, p. 97). He was convinced that a one-sided individualism results in the 'illusion of being really able to stand and act alone - an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remediable suffering of the world' (Dewey 2015, p. 54, as cited in Fesmire, 2003, p. 104). For Dewey, acting is a process of doing and undergoing in which others have an

influence on us. He applies this interactive idea of action to his account of dramatic rehearsal:

> In language and imagination we rehearse the responses of others just as we dramatically enact other consequences. We foreknow how others will act, and the foreknowledge is the beginning of judgment passed on action. We know *with* them; there is conscience. An assembly is formed within our breast which discuses and appraised proposed and performed acts. The community without becomes a forum and tribunal within, a judgment-seat of charges assessments and exculpations. Our thoughts of our own actions are saturated with the ideas that others entertain about them, ideas which have been expressed not only in explicit instructions but still more effectively in reaction to our acts. (2002, p. 315)

If action is basically socially interactive action, it means that creative processes must somehow have a social basis as well. This is easy to see in for instance of music or theater, where different musicians and actors contribute to a shared performance: these are examples of collective creative practice that are not reducible to individual acts. However, even cases of creativity that does not involve collective practice seem to be in a significant way socially embedded. Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi makes such a claim in his qualitative-psychological study of creativity. He replaces the romantic-individual model of creativity with a systemic model and argues that creativity 'does not happen inside people's heads, but in the interaction between a person's thoughts and a sociocultural context' (2013, p. 23). Even if creative practices do not concern collective action, creativity is socially constituted in the sense that it results from the interaction of 'a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation' (2013, p. 6). Csikszentmihalyi mainly focuses on Big C creativity and Pro-c creativity, but I think his point that creativity as a phenomenon cannot be disconnected from social structures corresponds to my contextual approach to innovative moral creativity. Such moral creativity arises in the confines of a context and depends on the particularities of that very context, which means it often develops interactively or at least depends on others. This, again, is most

evident in cases that clearly contain collective actions. It is difficult not to see the creativity of the Bruxelles Gazelles as a shared process whereby volunteers collectively improve the life quality of their fellow city dwellers.

Dewey's model of dramatic rehearsal as a phase of socially embedded action shows that individual creative processes do not only take off in individual moments of illumination and insight, but in patterns of collective action. Take for instance the series of *School Strikes For Climate*, which started as an individual initiative of Greta Thunberg who started a daily sit-in in front of the Swedish parliament. In a very short time, this evolved to a global movement, where school children, but soon also activists, scientists, grandparents, and political parties protested the public policy on climate change. There are countless other examples of collective actions developing in similar ways: people cleaning up rivers, doing urban gardening, greening their streets, organizing workshops and repair cafés, and so on. For people who decide to join in these processes, individual creative processes might start here, when being involved in collective action that is already going on. Take for example the *Cool Streets* project in Blacktown, West-Sidney. Because of climate change, this area will be threatened by extreme heat, fire, and drought. The population is ethnically diverse and economically vulnerable: which often results in other priorities: 'They've got bigger problems in their life than whether the streets have trees, whether climate change is actually occurring, whether their streets are getting hotter, whether that's an issue' (Steele et al., 2018, p. 282). However, projects as *Cool Streets* give such citizens the chance to participate in very different environmental activities on waste-processing, 'upcycling', suburban bee-keeping, and urban forestry. In this last activity, citizens can design and develop new green elements in their streets. One involved city planner testified that

> It's not just about planting trees, it's about engaging with the community about planting those trees and showing them what those trees are going to do, change the livability of their street and talk to them before you put the trees in, and talking to them face to face in their street about where the trees are going and what they want for their street first before you do it.' (Steele et al., 2018, p. 282)

Actively taking part in such shared practices can evoke insights on a personal level. Getting involved in planting trees or designing urban planning makes it easier to grasp there are feasible ways to green one's household or to understand that the neighborhood you live can be improved. Sometimes dialogue, as in the testimony of the planner, helps to come to such insights. But the very reason that dialogue would make sense is that it is embedded in shared practice.

I think it is important to highlight the social embeddedness and development of the creative processes in cases as *Cool Streets* as this might serve emancipation and inclusion. It might lower the presupposed threshold of creativity and include people and communities in societally relevant creative processes of which they are often excluded or think they are excluded.

A result of the historical emphasis on what is seen as the crucial stage of creativity – the individually experienced illumination or a-ha moment – is that creativity is too often attributed to mostly high-educated people that have time and recourses to spend time on thinking up and testing out ideas. At the beginning of the 21st century, Sociologist Richard Florida named this group the *creative class*: 'people whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and new creative content' (Florida, 2002, p. 8). Florida argued how this class is dominant in and crucial for our 21st century economy. However, this idea of framing creativity as the activities of a privileged societal class excludes a lot of profiles from what is thought of as exemplary creativity. I believe this is problematic as creativity includes typical human thought and action that is not restricted to the happy few. I think this even might become a self-fulling prophesy. When we identify creativity with a creative class, we might thereby restrict the possibilities of people to engage in contextually innovative creativity.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Dewey already remarked that creativity in business is 'restricted to such a small class, those who have to do with banking, finding a market, and manipulating investments' (2002, p. 146). He observed that 'when a man is only the tender of a machine, he can have no insight and no affection; creative activity is out of the question' (2002, p. 144). Dewey considers dramatic rehearsal as the main instrument for self-development and social progress but realizes at the same time its successful use depends on social structures and conventions as well.

Dewey only shortly refers to creativity but, his main point is we should create circumstances where all social classes have the possibility of intelligent reconstruction of their actions. I think he is right. Projects like *Cool Streets* show how particular conditions can offer people the chance to exercise contextually innovative creativity. But in addition, I think that the contextually innovative practice that shows here exemplifies how much moral, societally relevant creativity develops collectively. Therefore, we must be careful to identify creativity with a 'creative class'. The idea of a creative class holds the risk of mainly promoting economically productive creativity, by which we might lose track from bottom-up societally relevant examples of creativity. Answers to societal challenges (e.g., climate change) that have repercussions on small and large scales do not (need to) come merely from a rich well-educated class developing top-down technological solutions. Bottom-up initiatives including people of different societal groups and classes (e.g., laborers, caregivers, newcomers, activists, children, and so forth) will be needed to successfully transform practices affected by climate change. Key for societal change and improvement is that people can be included in such initiatives which they might be unable to instantiate themselves (e.g., greening streets, beekeeping, and climate litigation).

14. Moral Creativity and Perfection

Until now, I have approached moral creativity as a contextual phenomenon and a process. I first illustrated the phenomenon by referring to examples of innovative contextual change and improvement. Second, I discussed Murdoch's and Dewey's theories of moral imagination in relation to the morally creative process.

However, 'creativity' is a term that not only refers to phenomena or processes but is also ascribed to persons. In this final chapter, I will examine whether we can consider creativity as some sort of character trait. I do so, again, by contrasting Murdoch and Dewey, and discussing approaches to creativity as a (set of) skills or a virtue of character. The central question in this chapter is whether moral creativity can be rightfully seen as one of these things. I formulate my answer to this question in three parts. First, I look at the place of perfection and growth in the work of Murdoch and Dewey. Second, I consider the idea of creativity as a (set of) skills or a virtue. Third, I formulate a critical approach to a dispositional account of moral creativity.

14.1. Perfection and Growth in Murdoch and Dewey

Remember Gaut's remark that creativity requires action: you must *do* something creative to be called creative (See part II, section 10.1.). If we would attribute creativity to persons, it would refer to something one acquires and develops through imagination-in-action (e.g., a skill or a virtue). This would imply that creativity is something you can perfect, rather than a natural talent or predisposition. We might say, then, that moral creativity brings moral improvement on a contextual level, and moral progress on a personal level.

The theme of moral progress is prominent in the work of Murdoch and Dewey, who are convinced we can adjust our habits and perceptions and so improve our view of and interaction with the world. According to Murdoch, one of the most important questions in our moral lives (and which moral philosophy must provide an answer on) is 'How can we make ourselves better?' (2001, p. 76). For Dewey, moral deliberation is fundamentally about

'what kind of person one is to become, what sort of self is in the making, what kind of a world is making' (2002, p. 217).

The idea of moral progress is deeply woven into Dewey's thought. Dewey considers human life as a constant search and trial, in which we must consciously act and adapt our acts and he understands progress consequently as a process of intelligent adaptation to changing circumstances. According to him, this dynamic applies to all aspects of our lives, so he makes no distinction between a moral and an a-moral realm. Dewey thinks that 'morals has to do with all activity into which alternative possibilities enter. For wherever they enter a difference between better and worse arises' (2002, p. 278). 'Better and worse' are here understood in a general practical sense. For Dewey, Fesmire argues, '"You ought not to steal" is not essentially different than "You ought not to plant beans outdoors in the New England winter."' (Fesmire, 201, p. 129) Dewey considers both beliefs intelligent as they are a result of successful dramatic rehearsal. It is not that the first is different from the second because some overarching moral principle would justify it. Fesmire calls Dewey a 'pragmatic experimentalist' or a 'fallibilist who inspects beliefs for their value as directive hypotheses. If there is a single lesson of the sciences, for Dewey it is that beliefs that mature through ongoing interactive engagement with the world are truer to the mark' (Fesmire, 2003, p. 37). Dewey considers ideas and beliefs (including moral ones) as directive hypotheses whose value must be tested by dramatic rehearsal. During dramatic rehearsal, we test possibilities to act on, and eventually, we re-evaluate those ideas and beliefs on the basis of their practical application.

However, this does not mean moral deliberation *cannot* include moral principles. Dewey was not against rules and principles but emphasized that 'the choice is not between throwing away rules previously developed and sticking obstinately by them. The intelligent alternative is to revise, adapt, expand, and alter them. The problem is one of continuous, vital readaptation' (2002, p. 240). This resembles Dewey's idea that the significant difference is not between reason and habit but between intelligent and unintelligent habit (see part II, section 11.1). Dewey does not advocate a hard particularism in which principles and rules would have no place in moral deliberation. He repeatedly emphasizes the way how rules and

customs have been formed historically and how they function as guidelines in our actions. However, he stresses the importance of a flexible attitude towards rules and customs, i.e., a willingness to refine, adapt, or revise them when a situation demands it. In a Deweyan vision of morality, principles are neither the start nor the end of moral deliberation, at most they can be guidelines that play an orienting role in our decisions (Fesmire, 2003, p. 3). For Dewey, they are thus no universal, ever-lasting, a-historical standards to derive our actions from or judge them. If we want to act morally, we thus always need to 'test', imaginatively and practically, whether our actions are the right ones. [51]

Dewey rhetorically asked if this perspective would not equate the moral life to 'the futile toil of a Sisyphus' and answered:

> Yes, judged from progress made in a control of conditions which shall stay put and which excludes the necessity of future deliberations and reconsiderations. No, because continual search and experimentation to discover the meaning of changing activity, keeps activity alive, growing in significance. (2002, p. 208)

For Dewey, moral progress is not about performing actions in accordance with a certain ideal in pursuit of uniformity but about adaptation. He thinks the idea of fixed principles and ideals fails to grasp our lives as organisms-in-environments characterized by the constant encounter of new obstacles and challenges and the need for changing activity. Dewey sees an ideal as an idea of stagnation (more on this below), while progression for him corresponds to the constant reconstruction of action.

Moral progress is a central theme in Murdoch's work as well. Murdoch explains moral progress as perfection of perception, i.e.,

---

[51] Fesmire's rather extreme comparison between stealing and planting beans in New England is not that well-chosen as this seems to suggest that Dewey sees no difference at all between these two beliefs. I think Fesmire use this example to show that Dewey's experimentalism recognizes no substantial difference in how moral and other beliefs come about in general. However, I think Dewey would recognize the difference between these two beliefs in terms of unconditionality; the general rule 'you ought not steal' is an example of an intelligent, historically developed rule that works as a good moral guideline.

.

perfecting one's imaginative apprehensions of reality. The difference between Dewey's and Murdoch's idea of progress is partly due to their different moral and metaphysical frameworks. Dewey's theory of constant adaptation is Darwinian; adaptation concerns the reconstruction of actions in one's environment. Murdoch, however, entertains a broader idea of reality that includes the transcendent reality of Good in addition to particular realities that surrounds us (what Dewey would call the environment). Moral progress is for Murdoch about getting a better grasp of those two types of moral reality. Like Dewey's idea of continual search and adaptation, Murdoch considers progress as an open-ended process as our apprehension of particular realities and the transcendent reality of the Good is always incomplete.

In chapter 12, I discussed Murdoch's idea of the Good as a transcendent reality by referring to Murdoch's comparison of the Good with the sun. However, the Good is for Murdoch not only a reality but also an ideal that governs our apprehension of the world. Another telling metaphor she uses to describe the Good is that of a magnetic center. Recall how Murdoch in *The Darkness of Practical Reason* said that 'if the magnetic field is right our movements within it will tend to be right' (1966, p. 50). According to Murdoch, reality exerts a certain force on us, so that when we perceive it accurately, right actions towards it will follow. Murdoch thinks that, similarly, the Good is a magnetic centre (2001, p. 73, 100) that exerts a force on us just like particular realities do. The Good is of course not visible in the same way as particular realities as the comparison with the sun shows.

Dewey is very critical of ideals, which he considers as the idea of 'isolated, complete or fixed' ends, which he finds dangerously as it 'encourages insincerity, and puts a pseudo-stamp of moral justification upon success at any price' (2022, pp. 230-31). Dewey criticized what he called a dominant love for perfection (2002, p. 173) in moral philosophy, by which he meant something different than Murdoch's moral activity of perfecting one's perception. With 'perfection', Dewey refers to a 'conception of completed activity, a static perfection that treats desire and need as 'signs of deficiency, and endeavor as proof not of power but of incompletion' (2002, p. 174) which he traces back in different philosophical traditions. He mentions Aristotle (eudaemon as the highest end) , Spencer (a final

state of adaptation as the endpoint of evolution), Kant (Dewey seems to refer to his Kingdom of Ends by associating Kant with an ideal 'of the eternal and undisturbed union of virtue and joy, though (…) nothing but a symbolic approximation is admitted to be feasible'), medieval Christianity (heavenly bliss for the immortal soul) and Buddhism ('Nirvana, an obliteration of all thought and desire') (Dewey 2002, pp. 174-175). Dewey is critical for these representations as they present the ideal situation as one where action is no longer needed: eudaimonia, Nirvana, and heavenly bliss represent a state where the characteristic struggle of human life has disappeared. One could object this is an uncharitable reading of these authors. Take for instance Kant's Kingdom of Ends, which is a hypothetical state, a directive ideal that governs our use of the categorical imperative. Dewey's summary here is indeed a bit short-sighted, but I think his main point is that we should not act with the ideal of certainty and rest in mind, but with the expectation of uncertainty and struggle.

Dewey may be wary of ideals that represent a state of static perfection, but he too seems to advocate a certain ideal. Dewey's moral theory is embedded in a philosophy that is deeply concerned with societal improvement. He is an optimist who assumes that man can progressively change his life and society. While he is critical of the role of 'fixed ends' in deliberation, he argued that the thing at stake in any case of serious deliberation is 'what kind of person one is to become, what sort of self is in the making, what kind of a world is making' (2002, p. 217). In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Dewey explicitly speaks of the moral ideal of growth:

> the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing. (…) The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth and learning, are not goods to be possessed as they would be if they expressed fixed ends to be attained. They are directions of change in the quality of experience. Growth itself is the only moral "end." (2015, p. 1837)

Dewey's ideal of moral growth can be compared with Murdoch's explanation of the Good as the certainty that 'there is a "true direction" toward better conduct, that goodness "really matters"' (2001, p. 59). In this sense, Dewey's ideal of growth seems to play a somewhat similar role to Murdoch's ideal of the Good: a general direction we have in mind for our actions without assurance of the outcome of our actions. The point where Murdoch and Dewey diverge is Murdoch's claim 'that certainty about a standard suggests an idea of *permanence* [emphasis added], which cannot be reduced to psychological or any other set of empirical terms' (2001, p. 59). Dewey questions the idea of permanence that Murdoch connects with the Good: an indefinable, but undeniably existing reality. However, according to Murdoch, the permanence of Good does not imply total knowability. Our relation to the good is a continuous task of further figuring out what the good is by apprehending the world.

Murdoch's idea of perfection may include the idea of a fixed reality, but our relationship toward that reality - the activity of perfection - resembles Dewey's 'ever-enduring process of perfecting.' In this, Dewey was thus not that different from Murdoch: both saw the activity of perfection- i.e., perfecting; not a state of perfection - central to moral life. For both of them the tool to achieve progression is imagination. Imagination plays a pivotal role in progressively apprehending reality and reconstructing action through dramatic rehearsal. In the previous sections, I explained the morally creative process through these two forms of moral imagination. The question that arises in this chapter is whether creativity, ascribed to a person, can then be seen as something that one acquires through perfecting one's apprehensions and actions. In the following sections I examine the suggestion that creativity must be seen as a skill or virtue Then I look at how this relates to Murdoch and Dewey's emphasis on perfecting one's apprehension and action.

14.2. Moral Creativity and Skill

In his Deweyan analysis of creativity, Coeckelbergh argues that moral creativity is a 'practical imagination that develops as one copes with problems' and emphasizes 'it is about skill, and skill

requires training' (Coeckelbergh, 2014, pp. 54-55). He calls moral creativity a 'moral craftmanship':

> It involves physical and bodily engagement with things; these physical, bodily practices give us tactile experience and relational understanding, a "tacit knowledge" of morality; and this produces virtue (*arete*) The morally creative person is creative and imaginative in the way a cook is creative. A cook's knowledge is not merely theoretical and conceptual: his or her knowledge is tacit, has developed by means of tactile experience and involvement with food and people. Similarly, a moral "chef" is wise and creative: he or she has not the wisdom and the imagination of Plato's statesman, but the wisdom and imagination of the moral cook, who has practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and exercises practical creativity and practical imagination. This enables him or her to respond adequately to the situation, the people, and the problem at hand. (2014, p. 56)

Coeckelbergh's image of craftsmanship suggests that moral creativity essentially comes down to the virtuous mastery of skills. He suggests that those skills are comparable to the tacit knowledge of the cook and the assembling and repairing skills of the car mechanic. Coeckelbergh uses this representation to contrast his idea of creativity as a practical imagination with his idea of creativity as a study-room imagination.

Skills - experiential, practical expertise - indeed seem to be of importance in creativity. Think of the structural engineer getting better at realizing seemingly unrealistic architectural designs or Mondriaan who got sensitive to the relative proportions of different-sized squares and color patches. Their know-how undeniably plays a role in working out innovative designs or surprising or unique artworks like Mondrian's neoplasticist art. This seems to count for some cases of moral creativity as well. Scheherazade's competence and storytelling helped her in gaining the trust of the king. And Mandela's use of Afrikaans in the context of a negotiation relied on his knowledge and use of Afrikaans during his time at Robben Island.

That such skills are somehow involved in those case of creativity and moral creativity seems rather uncontroversial. But the question remains how decisive skills are for creativity. The skills that mentioned above are practice-specific skills: cooking, car

assembling designing, painting, storytelling, and language use. Such skills are highly specialized and suited for a particular context. A car mechanic's skill of assembling is not of much advantage in the case of the cook, just as Mandal's skillful language use is different from Scheherazade's story-telling skills.

If creativity comes down to a mastery of these kinds of skills, moral creativity might be considered a domain-specific moral craftmanship rather than a general character trait. This image of creativity compares to what is known in psychology as the domain-specificity of creativity. John Baer is known for arguing that creativity relies on highly specialized domain-specific skills. He supports his theory with experiments using CAT-assessments (Consensual Assessment Technique). In these experiments, an expert jury is asked to rate the creativity of specific task performances, similar to prize committees that rate the work of practitioners of a certain field (e.g., the Academy Award, the Man Booker Prize). Psychological research has asked test subjects to complete different creative tasks, later to be evaluated independently by domain-specific expert groups and compared these creative scores afterwards. For example, one study asked 50 students to create poems, stories, mathematical word problems, and interesting mathematical equations (Baer, 1993). What this research observed were 'low correlations among the creativity ratings of different artifacts produced by the same subjects' (Baer, 2015, p. 29). On basis of this lack of correlation, it is then argued that creative practice builds on domain-specific skills that vary among different creative practices.

These experiments indeed seem to suggest that creative practices build on domain-specific skills that vary among different creative process. However, one could still argue that these experiments do not exclude the possibility of more general, domain-general skills or traits that make a person creative. After all, what expert assessments seem to be judging is not the emergence of creativity *as such*, but the surprising use of certain domain-specific skills. See for instance the typical emphasis on domain-specific skills in the reviews of the Chopin's piano competition and the jury report of the literary Booker International prize:

> Liu dazzled the jury with spectacular virtuosity at every stage of the competition. His rapid articulation and pearlescent passagework saw Liu receive rapturous applause and a standing ovation for his performance of Chopin's Concerto No 1 in E minor. (Gramophone, 2021)

> Evaristo's novel, he [the chair of judges, Peter Florence] said, was "groundbreaking", with "something utterly magnificent about the full cast of characters"; the novelist set out to write in a polyphonic series of voices as a "strategy against invisibility", because "we black British women know that if we don't write ourselves into literature, no one else will. (Flood, 2019)

Domain-specific skills for sure help to arrive at creative results, but the question remains whether creativity across different practices requires some general domain-transcending character traits. After all, the thesis of domain specificity is contradicted by a whole tradition in psychometric approaches - focusing on personality traits instead of task performances - that does identify some general character traits with creative performance. Feist's meta-analytical study of 50 years of research on personality and creative achievement concluded that creative people are in general 'more open to new experiences, less conventional and less conscientious, more self-confident, self-accepting, driven, ambitious, dominant, hostile, and impulsive. Out of these, the largest effect sizes were on openness, conscientiousness, self-acceptance, hostility, and impulsivity' (Feist, 1998, p. 290). This is mirrored in Csikszentmihalyi's influential interview-based creativity research. Based on 91 lengthy interviews of creative personalities across very different domains, he concludes that what they – first of all – have in common is 'complexity' (2013, p. 57). He clarifies this general characterization by showing how creative people tend to switch between (but are however able to integrate) pairs of dialectical extremes. He names physical energy vs. rest, smartness vs. naivety, playfulness vs. discipline, imagination, and fantasy, vs. a rooted sense of reality, introvert vs. extravert, proudness vs. humbleness, feminine vs. masculine aspects, rebelliousness vs. an internalized sense of culture, passionate vs. objective, suffering vs. enjoying (2013, pp. 58-73).

The identification of such character traits among creativity practitioners in different domains and contexts suggests that creativity involves more than a particular set of domain-specific skills. Perhaps being creative implies more than the craftsmen-like application of skills, but using them in a certain way. Gaut compares the use of skills in creativity with the use of skills in mountain climbing. He argues that, just as a creative agent, a mountain climber 'has to have the right attitudes and values as well'. To be a decent mountain climber, you must not be overconfident or insecure. Gaut thinks that similarly: 'someone may have creative ability, but be poor at exercising the skill, because he or she is too timid to take the risks involved in being creative' (2013, p. 98). Gaut seems to have a point: the way one uses the skills in creativity seems to be more important than the skills themselves. Some authors have therefore suggested that creativity is a virtue rather than a skill.

14.3. Moral Creativity and Virtue

Matthew Kieran has argued that 'exemplary creativity should be thought of as a virtue of character rather than just a mere skill or capacity' (2014, p. 125). Kieran builds forth on treatments of creativity as an artistic or intellectual virtue inspired by classic virtue ethics (see Swanton, 2003; Zagzebski, 1996). He focuses on artistic creativity and distinguishes the exemplary variant from a 'minimal sense of creativity tied to agents just producing novel and valuable artifacts' (2014, p. 128). Kieran thinks exemplary creativity, being a virtue of character, implies the right kind of motivation. This reflects Aristotle's classic description of the virtuous person as someone who

> must be in a certain condition (…); in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. (1941, pp. 1105a30–1105a34)

Kieran focuses on the second requirement in his defense of creativity as a virtue of character, which he refers to as intrinsic

motivation.[52] According to Kieran, exemplary creativity is motivated by the central values of the relevant domain. He defends this claim by referring to empirical research and some speculative examples of his own. He first mentions psychological research in which two groups of students (and a control group) were given the task of writing poetry that was evaluated on its creativity by experts (Amabile, 1985). Both groups were given a list of motivations for writing poetry before completing the assignment and were first given the task of ranking these motivations. One group received a list of intrinsic motivations, the other got a list of extrinsic ones. The outcome of the test was that the group that had to rank intrinsic motivations before the assignment wrote more creative poems than the group that had to rank extrinsic motivations. The researchers concluded that intrinsic 'motivational orientation' leads to more creative performances. Kieran concludes from this research that intrinsically motivated persons will achieve more creative results than extrinsically motivated persons. He is convinced that 'the more deeply embedded the intrinsic motivation, the more creative someone will be in a given domain across different situations, and

[52] Accounts that defend the idea of creativity as a virtue of character (see also Astola et al., 2022) typically focus on this requirement so I will focus on this requirement as well here. I find the first requirement rather uncontroversial applicable to creativity while I think the third is less obvious for creativity. Creativity indeed seems to require different types of knowledge, both general knowledge about the world and more specific knowledge about the particular domain or context. In that sense, creativity is not so different from other virtues, such as courage. But the similarity between courage and creativity seems to me less obvious regarding the third requirement. In the classic virtue-ethical meaning of the term, one would call someone courageous because he displayed courage not only in one case but, consistently, in several different settings. When he would display clear examples of cowardice contradicting his former courageous acts, we would be less inclined to call him courageous. In the case of creativity, however, I do not think we do expect an unchangeable character and similar acts stemming from that character. Creativity typically requires to try-out new things and therefore typically includes failures (see part I, section 4.2.). It profits from risk-prone attempts to transgress customary practices (including one's own). I will say more about the idea of an unchangeable character and creativity's transgressiveness below.

the more we admire and praise him as a creative person' (2014, p. 131).[53]

Kieran does not deny the role of extrinsic motivations in creativity and grants that extrinsic motivations can play a supportive role. He argues that extrinsic motivation can be synergistic or non-synergistic (after Collins & Amabile, 1999), i.e., it can, respectively improve creativity by enhancing supporting conditions (e.g., financial welfare, social acceptance) or obstruct it by '[diminishing] a subject's feeling of self-control and [undermining] creative activity' (2014, p. 134). However, Kieran still holds that there is a difference between creativity that springs from synergistic extrinsic motivation and purely intrinsically motivated creativity. The jazz musician that is playing jazz music hoping for social acclaim, to use Kieran's example, is somehow creative. He performs the creative act of playing a musical instrument on stage, but at the same time, he will be less considered to incorporate what other intrinsically motivated musicians will regard this activity's central values. Kieran holds that jazz musicians who *are* motivated by these values display *exemplary* creativity, while the musician playing for social acclaim might only be creative in a minimal sense (2014, p. 130).

I agree with Kieran we value intrinsic motivation in creativity. We often admire people who are absorbed by certain goals or ideals, and who, despite setbacks of all kinds of sorts, continue doing what they are doing. We tend to admire talented musicians who live for their (often underpaid) work. I think this kind of admiration leads to Kieran's virtue idea of exemplary creativity. Nevertheless, I think his central thesis that exemplary creativity is intrinsically motivated is problematic for two reasons.

The first problem is that Kieran's idea of exemplary creativity is contradicted by many other paradigm examples of creativity – that we might call exemplary – that are grounded by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Berys Gaut makes this claim in response to Kieran's virtue model of creativity. He argues that creativity is 'a kind of dispositional excellence, but it is not a virtue in the paradigm sense of that term, what I will call 'fully-fledged' virtue. This is because of the motivational structure of creativity, with its

[53] Hawley (2018, p. 68) similarly suggests that 'creditable original work, original work generated through the exercise of creative virtue, would thus be more valuable than merely original work.'

characteristically mixed motivations' (2014, pp. 182-183).[54] Gaut gives the example of rivalry between Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse being a 'driving force in both their careers' (2014, p. 195). We should not underestimate the force of extrinsic motivations in creativity. Lots of similar clearly creative achievements have a mixed-motivational basis. Another telling art example is the work of Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, who switched from poetry to prose to secure the financial situation of his family (see Rother, 2005). While this move was prompted by a clear case of extrinsic motivation, it resulted in remarkable prose such as the megalomaniac *2666*, a work bursting with different styles and storylines. We might assume that Bolaño was at least partially led by intrinsic motivations as well (why else would you spend the last five years of your life on a manuscript of more than a thousand pages?), but this does not undo the role extrinsic motivation played in his prose writing. Exemplary creativity such as Picasso, Matisse, and Bolaño's are thus all examples of creativity with a mixed-motivational basis.

Gaut also questions Kieran's idea that intrinsic motivation would result in more *reliable* creativity: 'Creative actions are, by ordinary standards of reliability, often highly unreliable: they involve going beyond established outcomes, procedures or techniques, so are more likely to fail than routine actions' (2014, p. 193). I think Gaut has a good point here that leads me to the second problem of Kieran's virtue account of creativity: *because* creativity goes beyond those established standards, I think the term 'exemplary' is problematic. The idea of exemplary creativity implies that typical creativity corresponds to a certain ideal (in this case, being motivated by the central values of a domain) and that specific instances of such exemplary creativity (the intrinsically motivated jazz musician) acts as a reliable model for other creators. However, this picture of exemplarity and reliability is difficult to reconcile with the typically transgressive character of creativity. Creativity is often, and to some extent always, at odds with the central norms and/or expectations of a given domain or context. Creativity manages innovative change or novelty by deviating from standard ways of

[54] Gaut admits that everything depends on how we understand a virtue and therefore he is not entirely sure if Kieran's position is that distant from his own (2014, p. 183).

doing things, i.e., by transgressing those established ways. In fact, it is this aspect of creativity that make people doubt its value, because it is judged as *non-exemplary*, being out of touch with the central values, norms, and expectations of a particular domain and context. Take the following example.

On September 1, 2022, Ruth Lasters resigned as one of Antwerp's city poets. The Antwerp city poetship is a renowned institution where the city council funds selected poets to create work inspired by Antwerp's city life. It is regarded as an honor to be selected as a city poet, and the project is meant to encourage writers to engage with local themes and to make contemporary poetry more accessible to different groups of citizens. In the past, poems have been projected or painted on large buildings, sown in the form of flowers, and printed on wedding cards. Some poems were openly criticized by local politicians, but in the end, the selected poets enjoyed artistic freedom. However, in 2022, the city council refused to publish Lasters' poem *Losgeld* ('Ransom'). It was critical of the Flemish high school system: as it distinguishes between A-studies and B-studies. A stands for more theoretical studies (such as STEM-courses and languages), B stands for practically-oriented studies (such as plumbing, hairdressing, and sales). The poem openly questions why being a senator or notary would be more prestigious than being a plumber or dock worker and suggests how this societal division is sustained by the A- and B-division in education. This poem was refused because of the tension between what was considered the central value of the domain (in this case: public poetry) and the creative interventions in that domain. The alderman of culture who refused the publication of this poem declared that

> A city poem should bring people together, but this poem does rather the opposite. (…) A city poem should not be a megaphone for complaints or politics. Yet, with this poem we had the impression that Lasters wants to express a political opinion. The style does not connect [different citizens], but only widens the gap. The poem reads like a political manifesto. If she wants to engage in politics, she should get into politics. But a city poem does not serve that purpose. [55]

[55] Article in Dutch, my translation.

This reaction demonstrates how creativity often challenges central values, norms, and expectations of a certain domain and context. In this case, the expectations of what poetry is, or what a city poetship should entail. Part of Lasters' poem creative quality is exactly the way it transgresses the idea of what a city poetship should entail, by voicing the perspective of an underrepresented group in society. The type of transgression we see here is part of moral creativity as well. Looking back at it, is easy to see that the soldiers did something good during the Christmas truce. But there, in the context of WWI, their behavior was anything but evident. The soldiers were there not to fraternize but to defend their country against the enemy. There are several testimonies from superiors or soldiers who dismissed these acts because they would break the soldier's will to fight.[56] Similarly, the creative adaptions of social practices during the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed and criticized because they would contradict the central value of those practices (e.g., online teaching and virtual family dinners).

The transgressive character of creativity comes in different degrees. Transgressiveness does not only apply to the mind-blowing, unbelievable Big-C creativity but to the contextually innovative variant I discuss here as well. Laster's city poem is not transgressive because it is something radically new: there have been countless poets that addressed social issues with and through their work. What makes Lasters' poem transgressive is that it follows the conventions and norms of one domain (poetry) but not necessarily those of another subdomain (the city poem). Or think back about the climate activist example. Seen from the perspective of climate activism, throwing paint at artworks is an exemplary case of non-violent but attention-grabbing activism, but seen from the standpoint of art preservation it might be regarded disrespectful or even harmful.

Kieran introduces the idea of *exemplary* creativity to support his idea of creativity as a virtue. The idea of exemplarity obviously fits a virtue model: a virtue implies a standard of behavior that must be met in order to qualify someone as virtuous. But the paradox we

[56] Hitler, who served as a solider in the Bavarian army during WWI, would have declared that 'Such a thing should not happen in wartime' and argued with fellow soldiers about the event: 'Have you no German sense of honor left at all?' (Ruane, 2014).

encounter - that 'exemplary' creativity is in fact rather non-exemplary - calls into question the whole idea of creativity as a virtue. Creativity is not a virtue because, as Gaut argues, it is based on mixed motivations *and* because it is difficult to reconcile with a particular standard by which it is measured. A virtue (let's say courage) shows in behavior that meets an ideal standard linked to that virtue. Suppose you pass by a house where a fire is breaking out on the second floor, and you decide to get a ladder to free the people trapped by the smoke. We would call you courageous because such act answers to an ideal of courage, e.g., a middle ground between recklessness and cowardice. Acts like these are called virtuous because they live up to such standards, while many examples of creativity imply the questioning of all sorts of standards. This tension between virtues and creativity makes that I am less inclined to talk about creativity and moral creativity as a virtue, and that I prefer a contextual approach to a dispositional approach. I elaborate further on this choice in the next and final section of part III.

14.4. A Dispositional Versus a Contextual Approach to Creativity

I believe the dispositional approach to creativity as a set of skills or a virtue falls short. In the previous section I tried to show why. Skills alone are too little to talk about creativity, you have to use them in a certain way. But creativity is neither a virtue of character because that 'certain way' means being conform to a certain standard, while creativity often transgresses such standards. Of course courageous acts can also be transgressive. Courageous acts can, for instance, transgress laws. Think of volunteers who accommodate migrants in difficult circumstances without residence permits. But even in these cases, we seem to test the question of whether something is courageous first and foremost against a moral ideal that transcends local law, while this is not necessarily the case for creativity.

I think the differences between creativity on the one hand and skills and virtues on the other hand complicates a dispositional approach to creativity and moral creativity. This is why I approach creativity as a phenomenon that occurs in a particular context, rather than applying a dispositional approach that primarily focuses on the character of the agent. My point here should not be misunderstood;

of course we can say of someone that she is creative. All the examples I discuss here involve agents or group of agents who deliberately try to bring contextual moral change and improvement. I side with the idea that creativity typically requires agency and is thus performed by agents (see Gaut, 2010, 2014, 2018; Stokes, 2011, 2014, and most explicitly Paul & Stokes, 2018). Creativity is initiated by agents who deliberately use their imagination to aim for contextual moral change and improvement. The question I would like to examine here is not whether we say, but what we say when we say that 'Joanna is creative'. The first impression is that we are saying something about her personality. But I think, however, that the label creativity refers foremost to the agent's actions and only in a secondary sense to the agent behind those actions. When we say that the soldiers in the Christmas truce are morally creative we refer foremost to the contextually shaped imagination-in-action: the fraternization (attempts) in the trenches. I think that only in a secondary sense we are saying something about the skills or virtues of the person that shows in the creativity – although creativity does not coincide with these skills and virtues

When we say of Scheherazade that she is creative, we are saying something about her skills of storytelling. When we say Fiennes was creative in organizing a lockdown dinner, we refer to her organizational skill. Skills are sometimes very specific given the context (the example of Scheherazade) in other cases they are applicable in different contexts (Fiennes organizational abilities, Mandela's language use). In addition, our statement about the creativity of persons refers to certain virtues. We may find Scheherazade's acts courageous or the Gazelles De Bruxelles' acts generous. One might even hold that Dewey and Murdoch described two other virtues that show in moral creativity: explorative attention and experimental intelligence. I think that, through creativity, we might perfect those skills and virtues but that creativity is itself no disposition that can be perfected. What clearly is prone to perfection are the involved skills. The creativity of Scheherazade and Fiennes can allow them to become better at storytelling and organizing. In addition, you could say that exploratory attention and experimental intelligence are being perfected. But recall how Murdoch and Dewey see perfecting our apprehension and adapting our action as a fundamentally unfinished process. This concerns a perfection that

is always imperfect because there are always better ways of looking at reality and our actions can always be progressively adjusted.

The reason Murdoch and Dewey give for the imperfection of the process of perfection, I believe, is twofold. According to Murdoch and Dewey, perfection can be complicated from within ourselves and from the context in which we find ourselves. According to Murdoch, perfectibility is thwarted by fantastic, egocentric representations of reality that prevent us from seeing what that reality is. Dewey will argue that intelligent adaptation of actions is obstructed by adherence to unintelligent customs. If the inner obstacles to perfection were the only obstacles, creativity would be something that depends entirely on ourselves. But both Murdoch and Dewey also show how perfection is complicated by the context in which we apply our imagination. For Murdoch, particular objects of reality and the reality of the Good can never be known in its completeness. For Dewey, our actions are fundamentally inadequate because all our actions must be seen as part of a transactional interrelation with the external world, where there are always certain problems or obstacles emerging that are beyond our control.

Murdoch's exploratory attention and Dewey's experimental intelligence can be regarded as two virtues that are manifest in moral creativity and worth pursuing. However, Murdoch's emphasis on reality other than your own and Dewey's emphasis on the embeddedness of action demonstrate how moral creativity entails more than that, as it is something that is determined not only by us but also by contextual factors. Therefore, I think that in a study of moral creativity, we would better shift the emphasis from a dispositional to a contextual approach that shows how creativity has multiple loci: the context in which it takes place, the process by which it is realized, the agents who are involved. A contextual approach shows how moral creativity crucially depends on the context. In Murdochian and Deweyan terms, such an approach focuses how creativity depends on and benefits from an obedience to reality and the social embeddedness of action. If there is something that characterizes the morally creative process it is that, while you can acquire skills and develop virtues that may be beneficial, you find yourself time and again in another context, with

other particularities that are not under your control. Again and again, moral life requires exploration and experimentation.

Summary of part III

In part III, I further elaborated on the relationship between Murdoch and Dewey's philosophical framework in relation to the morally creative process. Despite the difference in metaphysics, Murdoch and Dewey stress in their own way the importance of moral experience in morality. I used their different notions of experience (experience of something different than oneself vs. experience as a socially embedded and developing field-process) to point out two aspects of the morally creative process. First, I argued how a Murdochian idea of obedience to reality shows the importance of value appreciation in moral creativity in addition to the realization of valuable acts. Second, I argued how Dewey's interactive view of actions show how creative processes socially develop or are at least socially embedded. The concept of value appreciation balances the usual focus on personal illuminations and value creation in creativity research. It offers us insight in the evaluative aspects of creativity and about what (amongst other things) goes wrong in dark creativity. The social embeddedness of creative action show how social practice might be an entry point of the creative process. Realizing this might lower the perceived threshold of creativity and mitigate the risk of associating creativity as something restricted to the creations of a specific societal class or group.

I continued by examining the role of moral progress in Murdoch and Dewey and considered the question of whether we should consider creativity a skill or a virtue. The theme of moral progress is ubiquitous in Dewey's work, which he understands as the continuous adaptation of action. Murdoch understands moral progress in a different way, as the perfection of our apprehension of moral reality. For Murdoch, apprehension of reality also means apprehension of the Good. She sees the Good not only as a reality, but also as an ideal that governs our apprehension of the world. Contrasting this view with Dewey's aversion to ideals, I argued that his philosophy is, however, pervaded by the belief that man can progressively change his life and society. Thus Dewey's idea of constant adaptation also takes place against the background of an ideal of growth. I argued that the major difference between

Murdoch's ideal of the Good and Dewey's ideal of growth concerns the status of such an ideal as a metaphysical reality. However, I argued that both authors saw the activity of perfection - perfecting, not a state of perfection, is central to moral life.

I concluded part III by discussing the dispositional approach to creativity as a skill or as a virtue. Skills are insufficient to speak of creativity; creativity implies that you use skills in a certain way. However, I also problematized the idea of creativity as a virtue of character because of creativity's mixed-motivational basis and typically transgressive character. While a virtue answers to a standard, many examples of creativity question or transgress a context or domain's central expectations and values. I explained my preference for a contextual approach above a dispositional approach to creativity. I suggested that when we say of someone that she is creative, we primarily refer to contextually innovative imagination-in-action and only in a secondary sense to the characteristics of the creative agent. Therefore, I argued that a Murdochian-Deweyan contextual approach of moral creativity that recognizes the different loci of moral creativity is preferable to a dispositional approach.

Concluding Remarks

In each of the three parts of this thesis, I answered a central research question. In part I, I examined what moral creativity is. I characterized it as a moral phenomenon where individuals or groups realize contextual moral improvement. In part II, I examined the role of imagination in the morally creative processes. I arrived at a characterization of creativity as imagination-in-action that shows in inner and overt, or exploratory and experimental variants. In part III, I examined whether creativity is something perfectible. I argued for a contextual approach to creativity that recognizes how skills and virtues are part of creativity without losing track of the evaluative and social dimensions of moral creativity. In these concluding remarks, I would like to point out a few more things I hope to have achieved with this thesis apart from the answers given to the central research questions.

First, I hope to have offered a broad characterization of moral creativity that is open to other insights and examples. In this thesis, I have deliberately chosen (as far as reasonably possible) such broad characterizations over restrictive definitions to engage in a moral-philosophical inquiry that preserves the richness of the inquired phenomenon. The primary function of that inquiry is to get us closer to an understanding of the phenomenon that is manifest in our lives. I hope this offers the reader a pathway to understanding the moral significance of moral creativity, that reflects the way moral creativity is practiced in our daily lives. I also hope to have contributed to the philosophical debate on creativity by offering and analyzing examples of contextually innovative moral creativity, and by advocating a contextual approach that might be applied to other types of creativity.

The further hope is that the reader can contribute to a deeper understanding of moral creativity in the way I have. The characterizations I have formulated in this thesis (e.g., contextual innovation, exploratory attention, experimental intelligence) can be tools to achieve such a deeper understanding. However, I want to stress once more that those characterizations came about through exploration of some images of moral creativity, to say it in a Murdochian spirit. Those characterizations of moral creativity result

from the questions that opened up through the exploration of particular examples of moral creativity; What is going on there? Why is this important? What does it tell us about the protagonists, or the specific context? I hope to have encouraged the reader to think about moral creativity by exploring the reality of moral creativity in the same spirit.

I believe that when more people engage in such exploration, the understanding of moral creativity can be expanded in a way that Murdoch describes as a 'seeping of colour' (see part II, section 9.1): an understanding that, like a growing patchwork of paint strokes, reveal new dimensions and insights about how moral creativity manifests in our lives. Not only philosophical research but many styles of thought can contribute to such an understanding. This is reflected in the way I conceived this research. Several times I referred to literary fragments that revealed aspects of moral imagination and moral creativity. I also referred to testimonies in which peoples voiced their lived experiences. These types of texts have in common they evoke genuine human experiences, which I believe is the most basic material we need to improve our understanding of moral phenomena. Remember how Sophie Grace Chappell argues that ethics is mainly about (the exploration of) phenomenal contents (see part I, chapter 6). I am convinced the more of these phenomenologically rich stories, testimonies, and experiences moral philosophy has at its disposal, the better.

Second, I hope that with this thesis, I have contributed to a dialogue between Murdoch and Dewey's moral thinking. They lived in different times, were part of a distinct intellectual tradition and had other metaphysical presuppositions. Yet, I believe they are allies in the pursuit of a phenomenologically rich, reality-sensitive moral philosophy. I hope this speaks from my reflection on their models of moral imagination. But without a doubt, there is more to say about the convergences and divergences between their rich philosophical thought and more potential to use a Murdochian-Deweyan approach to understand other phenomena than moral creativity. I have used their models of moral imagination mainly in a positive argument: imagination plays a vital role in bringing contextual moral improvement. However, both thinkers have also paid extensive attention to factors that complicate such moral improvement. Murdoch refers to fantasy and Dewey to unintelligent

habits and customs as such factors. Murdoch explains fantasy by referring to the individual's self-centeredness that prevents her from seeing reality. Dewey explains customs as inherited patterns of action that can be unintelligent or intelligent. Here we again see the difference between two central aspects of Dewey and Murdoch's work that I discussed in different chapters. Murdoch stresses the existence of reality and our difficulty to perceive that reality truthfully while Dewey rather offers attention to the social embeddedness of our acts. I believe that combining these two aspects can be interesting in an approach to other phenomena besides moral creativity. Take, for example, what I consider a pressing societal challenge today: How should we deal with widely shared conspiracy theories and misinformation? You could approach this challenge with help of Murdoch's concept of fantasy to explain their attractiveness: conspiracy theories show us things we want to see that confirm our own egocentric fears and desires. However, this perspective alone might not be enough to explain their appeal. Another reason why we go along with conspiracy theories and misinformation is that they build on certain customs (e.g., seeking a scapegoat for complex problems, dividing society into an elite and non-elite part, considering social media as primary sources of information) or construct certain customs themselves (e.g., distrust of vaccination or state intervention in general in the case of the COVID-19-related misinformation and conspiracy theories). This could be just one example of how research of other morally significant phenomena could profit from a versatile Murdochian-Deweyan approach that is sensitive for individual idiosyncrasies and social conditioning.

Summary

In this dissertation, I offer a moral-philosophical exploration of moral creativity. The dissertation consists of three parts that each concentrate on one central research question.

The question central to Part I is: 'What is moral creativity?'

In part I, I characterize moral creativity as a significant moral phenomenon where individuals or groups (aim to) morally improve particular situations in innovative ways. I apply an observational and interpretive approach to moral creativity that surveys examples of moral creativity by placing them into conversation with characterizations of creativity and moral creativity in the philosophical creativity debate. This comparison most notably concentrates on the common characterization of creative products or acts as 'novel' and 'valuable'. I characterize the moral creativity that is demonstrated by my core examples as typically innovative and valuable. Such moral creativity brings spontaneous, unfamiliar solutions that actualize contextual moral improvement. After elaborating on this characterization, I clarify that it is not intended as a strict definition to which each case of moral creativity must answer but as a guideline that can help to provide and interpret phenomenologically accurate descriptions of moral creativity.

In part II, I examine in what ways imagination is at work in the morally creative process.

I define moral creativity as imagination-in-action that has inner and overt variants. I come to this description by discussing two pioneering models of moral imagination in relation to contextually innovative moral creativity. The first model is Iris Murdoch's model of moral imagination as imaginative apprehension. Murdoch stresses in her moral-philosophical work the moral importance of an inner activity, i.e., loving attention to other humans and objects surrounding us. I argue that we should understand that activity as an imaginative apprehension of reality, by which we improve our understanding of reality by imaginatively exploring it. I argue that imaginative apprehension is a part of the morally creative process but that Murdoch's model insufficiently

recognizes how moral creativity originates and develops within practice. I suggest that John Dewey's model of moral imagination can grasp this aspect of moral creativity since Dewey considers imagination as a phase of action in which we search solutions for practical problems and challenges. His model represents the experimental way imagination is part of the morally creative process by which individuals or groups try out things to realize contextual moral improvement.

I conclude part II by stressing that Murdoch and Dewey's models of moral imagination are different but not mutually exclusive. I consider them complementary in a philosophical reflection that recognizes both the inner-explorative and overt-experimental way imagination is part of the morally creative process.

In part III, I examine whether moral creativity can be considered a perfectible skill or virtue by setting up a dialogue between Murdoch and Dewey's thought.

I first compare Murdoch and Dewey's ideas on experience and experiential knowledge. I argue that their different notions of experience teach us two different things about moral creativity. Murdoch's notion of experience as the experience of something other than oneself reveals the importance of evaluative experience in moral creativity. In contrast, Dewey's interactive notion of experience shows how moral creativity is socially embedded and how morally creative processes often develop socially.

Second, I illustrate how individual moral progress is a shared theme in Murdoch and Dewey's work. Murdoch explains progress as the perfection of one's apprehension of reality, while Dewey considers progress to be an adapting of one's actions to their environment. I argue that both thinkers regard moral progress as an ever-ongoing activity directed at an ideal that can never be fully understood or achieved. In that sense, Murdoch's idea of the Good and Dewey's concept of growth must be seen as regulative ideals that form the background of our apprehensions and actions.

With Murdoch and Dewey's different notions of experience and their take on individual moral progress, I discuss whether moral creativity is a skill or virtue. I argue that skills and virtues can play a role in moral creativity but that moral creativity as such is no mere skill or virtue. I argue that when we call someone 'creative', we

primarily refer to the contextually innovative imagination-in-action and only in a secondary sense to the agent's character. Therefore, I defend a contextual approach to moral creativity. Such an approach does not reduce creativity to an individual's character and acts but regards creativity as a broader phenomenon that fundamentally depends on many contextual factors.

Samenvatting

Deze dissertatie omvat een moraalfilosofische verkenning van morele creativiteit in drie delen die elk een centrale onderzoeksvraag behandelen.

De centrale vraag van deel I luidt: 'Wat is morele creativiteit?'

In het eerste deel karakteriseer ik morele creativiteit als een significant moreel fenomeen waarbij individuen of groepen (ernaar streven om) bepaalde situaties op een innovatieve manier moreel te verbeteren. Ik hanteer een observerende en interpreterende benadering, waarbij ik voorbeelden van morele creativiteit bestudeer en deze voorbeelden vergelijk met populaire omschrijvingen van creativiteit en morele creativiteit in het filosofische creativiteitsdebat. Deze vergelijking richt zich met name op de beschrijving van creatieve handelingen en prestaties als 'nieuw' en 'waardevol'. Ik karakteriseer de morele creativiteit die spreekt uit mijn centrale voorbeelden als typisch innovatief en waardevol. Zulke morele creativiteit brengt namelijk spontane, onverwachte oplossingen die contextuele morele verbetering realiseren. Ik verduidelijk echter dat deze karakterisering geen strikte definitie is waaraan alle individuele gevallen van morele creativiteit moeten voldoen, maar een richtlijn die behulpzaam kan zijn in het fenomenologisch accuraat beschrijven van morele creativiteit.

In deel II onderzoek ik op welke manieren verbeelding werkzaam is in het moreel-creatieve proces.

Ik definieer morele creativiteit als verbeelding-in-actie die zich zowel op een innerlijke als op een uiterlijke wijze kan manifesteren. Dit doe ik door twee toonaangevende modellen van morele verbeelding in verband te brengen met contextueel-innovatieve morele creativiteit.

Het eerste model is Iris Murdochs model van morele verbeelding als een verbeeldingsrijk verstaan van de realiteit. Murdoch benadrukt in haar moraalfilosofisch werk het morele belang van een innerlijke activiteit, namelijk een liefdevolle aandacht voor mensen en dingen die ons omringen. Ik beargumenteer dat we deze activiteit moeten begrijpen als een verbeeldingsrijk verstaan,

waarbij we de werkelijkheid rondom ons beter begrijpen door ze met behulp van verbeelding te exploreren. Ik stel dat Murdochs verbeeldingsrijk verstaan deel is van het moreel-creatieve proces, maar dat haar model van morele verbeelding onvoldoende erkent hoe creatieve verbeelding vaak ontstaat vanuit en ontwikkelt doorheen de praktijk. Ik argumenteer dat John Dewey's model van morele verbeelding ons kan helpen om dit aspect van morele creativiteit te vatten. Dewey beschouwt verbeelding immers als een fase van ons handelen waarmee we oplossingen zoeken voor praktische problemen en uitdagingen. Zijn model representeert de experimentele wijze waarop verbeelding vaak deel is van het moreel-creatieve proces, waarbij individuen en groepen innovatieve handelingen uitproberen om zo daadwerkelijke contextuele morele verandering te realiseren.

Ik benadruk tot slot dat Murdochs en Dewey's modellen van morele verbeelding elkaar niet uitsluiten. Ze zijn immers complementair in een evenwichtige filosofische reflectie die de innerlijke, exploratieve, en de uiterlijke, experimentele verbeelding in morele creativiteit erkent.

In deel III onderzoek ik of we morele creativiteit kunnen beschouwen als een vaardigheid of een deugd die te perfectioneren valt door een dialoog op te zetten tussen het denken van Murdoch en Dewey

Eerst vergelijk ik Murdochs en Dewey's ideeën over ervaring en ervaringskennis. Ik beargumenteer dat hun noties van ervaring ons twee verschillende zaken leren over morele creativiteit. Murdochs notie van ervaring als ervaring van iets buiten jezelf toont het belang aan van evaluatieve ervaringen in creativiteit, terwijl Dewey's interactieve notie van ervaring toont hoe morele creativiteit sociaal ingebed is, en moreel-creatieve processen zich vaak ook sociaal ontwikkelen.

Ten tweede toon ik hoe individuele morele progressie een gezamenlijk thema is in het werk van beide denkers. Murdoch begrijpt progressie als het perfectioneren van ons verstaan van de realiteit, Dewey als het aanpassen van ons handelen aan de omgeving. Ik argumenteer dat beide denkers morele progressie beschouwen als een steeds voortdurende activiteit die zich richt op een bepaald ideaal dat nooit volledig begrepen of bereikt kan

worden. In die zin, zo argumenteer ik, vervult Murdochs idee van het goede en Dewey's idee van groei een gelijkaardige rol als regulatief ideaal waartegen ons verstaan en handelen zich aftekenen.

Met behulp van Murdochs en Dewey's verschillende noties van ervaring en hun gezamenlijke nadruk op individuele morele progressie richt ik me op de vraag of morele creativiteit gezien kan worden als een vaardigheid of een deugd. Ik beargumenteer dat vaardigheden en deugden een rol kunnen spelen in morele creativiteit, maar dat morele creativiteit op zichzelf beschouwd geen vaardigheid of deugd is. Ik stel dat wanneer we zeggen dat iemand moreel creatief is, we in de eerste plaats verwijzen naar de betreffende verbeelding-in-actie en slechts in secundaire zin iets zeggen over het karakter van de creatieve actor. Daarom verdedig ik een contextuele benadering van morele creativiteit. Zo'n benadering verengt creativiteit niet tot het karakter en de handelingen van een individu, maar beschouwt creativiteit als een breder fenomeen dat fundamenteel afhankelijk is van diverse contextuele factoren.

References

Adams, I. (2015). A Game for Christmas? The Argylls, Saxons and Football on the Western Front, December 1914. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, *32*(11-12), 1395-1415.

Alexander, T. M. (1990). Pragmatic Imagination. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 26, *3*, 325- 348.

Alexander, T. M. (1993). John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, *29*(3), 369–400.

Allison, R. (2017, July 15). 9/11 wicked but a work of art, says Damien Hirst. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/sep/11/arts.september11

Altorf, M. (2004). Iris Murdoch and the Art of Imagination: Imaginative Philosophy as Response to Secularism [doctoral dissertation]. University of Glasglow.

Altorf, M. (2008). *Iris Murdoch and the Art of Imagining*. London: Continuum.

Amabile, T. M. (1985). Motivation and creativity: Effects of motivational orientation on creative writers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*(2), 393–399.

Amazon. (n.d.). *Best sellers in Creativity*. Retrieved August 3, 2023, from https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books Creativity/zgbs/books/4737/ref=zg_bs_nav_books_2_4736

Antonaccio, M., Schweiker, W. (1996). Introduction. In M. Antonacio, W. Scheiker (Eds.), *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness* (pp. xi-xx). London: University of Chicago Press.

Aristotle. (1941) *The Basic Works of Aristotle.* (R. McKeon, Ed.). New York: Random House.

Astola, M., Bombaerts, G., Spahn, A., Royakkers, L. (2022). Can creativity be a collective virtue? Insights for the ethics of innovation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *179*(3), 907-918.

Audi, R. (2013). *Moral perception*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Audi, R. (2018). Attributing Creativity. In: B. Gaut, M. Kieran (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 25-41). New York: Routledge.
Baer, J. (1993). *Creativity and Divergent Thinking: A Task-Specific Approach*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
Baer, J. (2015). *Domain Specificity of Creativity*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
Barron, F. (1955). The Disposition Towards Originality. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *51*(3), 478–485.
Biss, M. (2014). Moral Imagination, Perception and Judgment. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *52* (1), 1–21.
Blum, L. (2012). Visual Metaphors in Murdoch's Moral Philosophy. In J. Broackes (Ed.), *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher: A Collection of Essays* (pp. 307-324). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Blum, L. (2023). Iris Murdoch. In E.N Zalta, U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/murdoch/
Boden, M. A. (2004). *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1990)
Bregman, R. (2021). *Humankind. A Hopeful History*. London, Bloomsbury.
Buchanan, R. T. (2014, December 23). Christmas Day Truce 1914: Volunteers re-enact football game on Belgium fields. *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/christmas-day-truce-1914-volunteers-reenact-football-game-on-belgium-fields-9941995.html
Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Habit. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/habit#
Capps, J. (2023). The Pragmatic Theory of Truth. In E.N Zalta, U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/truth-pragmatic

Carruthers, P. (2002). Human Creativity: Its Cognitive Basis, its Evolution, and its Connections with Childhood Pretense. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, *53*(2), 225–249.
Carruthers, P. (2007). The Creative Action Theory of Creativity. *The Innate Mind*, *3*, 154-71.
Carruthers, P. (2020). Mechanisms for constrained stochasticity. *Synthese*, *197*(10), 4455-4473.
Cassam, Q. (2023). Philosophical virtues. *Metaphilosophy*, *54*(2–3), 195–207.
Chappell, S. G. (2014). *Ethics and experience: Life Beyond Moral Theory*. New York: Routledge.
Chappell, S. G. (2017). *Knowing What To Do. Imagination, Virtue and Platonism in Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Chappell, S. G. (2021 February 17). Poetry and philosophy: Guest post by Sophie Grace Chappell. *The Philosopher's Cocoon*. https://philosopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/2021/02/poetry-and-philosophy-guest-post-by-sophie-grace-chappell.html
Chappell, S. G. (2022). *Epiphanies: An Ethics of Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Chappell, S. G. (2023) Reply to Commentators. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, *57*(1), 209–220.
Coeckelbergh, M. (2007). *Imagination and Principles. An Essay on the Role of Imagination in Moral Reasoning*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Coeckelbergh, M. (2014). Moral Craftsmanship. In S. Moran, D. Cropley, J. Kaufman (Eds.), *The Ethics of Creativity* (pp. 46-61) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Collingwood, R. G. (1938). The Principles of Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Collins, M. A., Amabile, T. M. (1999). Motivation and creativity. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 297–312). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Cowan, R. (2015). Perceptual intuitionism. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *90*(1), 164-193.
Cropley, D., Cropley, A., Kaufman, J., & Runco, M. (Eds.). (2010). *The Dark Side of Creativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cropley, D., Kaufman, J., Cropley, A. (2008). Malevolent Creativity: A Functional Model of Creativity in Terrorism and Crime. *Creativity Research Journal*, *20*(2), 105-115.
Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2013). *Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers. (Original work published 1996)
Cullison, A. (2010). Moral perception. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *18*(2), 159–175.
Dabrowski, M. (1995). Kandinsky: Compositions. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.
Dafaure, M. (2020). The "Great Meme War:" The Alt-Right and its Multifarious Enemies. *Angles. New Perspectives on the Anglophone World*, *10*, 1-28.
Dance, C. J., Ipser, A., Simner, J. (2022). The Prevalence of Aphantasia (Imagery Weakness) in the General Population. *Conscious Cogn*, *97*, 103243.
De Bruycker, G. (2015, September). Op pad met de multiculturele loopclub Les Gazelles De Bruxelles. [On the Road with the Multicultural Running Club Les Gazelles De Bruxelles]. *RunningBE*.
De Galbert, P. (2019, February 18). *My Favorite Nelson Mandela Misquote*. https://scholar.harvard.edu/pierredegalbert/node/632263
dEUS. (2005). Include Me Out [Song]. On *Pocket Revolution*. V2 Records International Limited.
Dewey, J. (1896). The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology. *Psychological Review, 3*, 357-370.
Dewey, J. (1984). Three Independent Factors in Morals. In J. A Boydston (Ed.), *The Later Works 1925-1953: Volume 5: 1929-1930* (pp. 279-288). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (Original work published 1930)
Dewey, J. (1985). Morals and the Political Order In J. A Boydston (Ed.), *The Later Works 1925-1953: Volume 7: 1932* (pp. 340-372). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (Original work published 1932)
Dewey, J. (1988). Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us. In J. A Boydston (Ed.), *The Later Works 1925-1953: Volume 14: 1939-1941* (pp. 224-230). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (Original work published 1939)

Dewey, J. (2002). *Human Nature and Conduct*. New York: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1922)
Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as Experience*. New York: Penguin.
Dewey, J. (2015). *Democracy and Education*. In D. Reed (Ed.), *The Collected Works of John Dewey: The Complete Works* (pp. 11-364). New York: Pergamon Media. (Original work published 1916)
Dewey, J. (2015). *Ethics*. In D. Reed (Ed.), *The Collected Works of John Dewey: The Complete Works* (pp. 945-1448). New York: Pergamon Media. (Original work published 1908)
Dewey, J. (2015). *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. In D. Reed (Ed.), *The Collected Works of John Dewey: The Complete Works* (pp. 1729-1857). New York: Pergamon Media. (Original work published 1920)
Diamond, C. (1991). Missing the Adventure. In Diamond, C, *The Realistic Spirit. Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (pp. 309-318). Cambridge: MIT Press.
Diamond, C. (2010). Murdoch the Explorer. *Philosophical Topics*, *38*(1), 51–85.
Feist, G. J. (1998). A Meta-Analysis of personality in scientific and artistic creativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *2*(4), 290–309.
Fesmire, S. (2003). *John Dewey & Moral Imagination*: Pragmatism in Ethics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
Fesmire, S. (2015). *Dewey*. London: Routledge
Flood, A. (2019, October 15). Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo share Booker prize 2019. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/14/booker-prize-judges-break-the-rules-and-insist-on-joint-winners
Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Perseus Book Group.
Frankena, W. (1963). *Ethics*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
Fraser, R. (2022, November 18). You owe me an argument [Review of the book *Epiphanies: An Ethics of Experience*, by S.G. Chappell] *Boston Review*. https://www.bostonreview.net/ net/articles/ you-owe-me-an-argument/
Galton, F. (1880). Statistics of mental imagery. *Mind*, *5,* 301-318.

Gaut, B, Kieran, M. (2018) Philosophising about creativity. In B. Gaut, and M. Kieran, (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 1-22). New York: Routledge.
Gaut, B. (2010). The Philosophy of Creativity. *Philosophy Compass*, 12(5), 1034–1046.
Gaut, B. (2013). Chapter Five: Creativity and Skill. In K. Bardsley, D. Dutton, M. Krausz (Eds.), *The Idea of Creativity* (pp. 83-103). Brill.
Gaut, B. (2014). Mixed Motivations: Creativity as a Virtue. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 75, 183-202.
Gaut, B. (2018). *The Value of Creativity*. In B. Gaut, M. Kieran (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 127-144). New York: Routledge.
Gaut, B. Livingston P (Eds.) (2003). *The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Gayle, D. (2022, October 14). Just Stop Oil activists throw soup at Van Gogh's Sunflowers. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/14/just-stop-oil-activists-throw-soup-at-van-goghs-sunflowers
Google Ngram Viewer. (n.d.). *Creativity*. https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=creativity&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3
Grant, J. (2012). The Value of Imaginativeness. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *90*(2), 275-289
Guilford, J. P. (1950). Creativity. *American Psychologist, 5*(9), 444 - 454.
Hawley, K. (2018). Creativity and knowledge. In B. Gaut, M. Kieran (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp 60-73). New York: Routledge.
Heil, E. (2021, October 28). Eating alone, together: Virtual dinner parties are helping people fight isolation. *Washington Post*.https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/voraciously/wp/2020/03/21/eating-alone-together-virtual-dinner-parties-are-helping-people-fight-isolation/
Hennessey, B. A, Amabile, M. (2010). Creativity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *61*(1), 569-598.

Hickman, L. A. (1990). *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Hildebrand, D. (2023). John Dewey. In E. N. Zalta, U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/dewey/
Hills, A., Bird, A. (2018). Creativity Without Value. In B. Gaut, M. Keiran (ds.). *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 95-107). New York: Routledge.
Hopwood, M. (2017). The Extremely Difficult Realization that Something other than Oneself is Real: Iris Murdoch on Love and Moral Agency. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *26*(1), 477-501.
Hutton, J. (2022). Moral Experience. Perception or Emotion. *Ethics*,132(3), 570-597.
James, H. (1966). *The Golden Bowl*. New York: Penguin Modern Classics.
James, H. (1977). *The Princess Casamassima*.. New York: Penguin.
James, W. (1918), *The Principles of Psychology* (Vol. 1). New York: Dover. (Original work published 1890)
James, W. (2019). *What Pragmatism Means*. Global Grey. (Original work published 1907)
Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagina*tion *and Reason*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Johnson, M. (1993). *Moral Imagination. Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Johnson, M. (2016). Moral Imagination. In A. Kind (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination* (pp. 355-367). New York: Routledge.
Kant, I. (2001). *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. (P Guyer, E Matthews, Trans.). New York: Cambridge University Press
Kapoor, H., & Kaufman, J. C. (Eds.) (2023). *Creativity and Morality*. Cambridge: Academic Press.
Kaufman, J. C, Beghetto, R. A. (2009). Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity. *Review of General Psychology*, *13*(1), 1–12.

Kaufman, J., Sternberg, R. (Eds.). (2010). *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kieran, M. (2014). Creativity as a Virtue of Character. In E. S. Paul, S. B. Kaufman (Eds.), *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays* (pp. 125-144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kind, A, Kung, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Knowledge Through Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kronfeldner, M. (2009). Creativity Naturalized. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, *59*(237), 577–592.
Kronfeldner, M. (2018) Explaining Creativity. In B. Gaut, and M. Kieran, (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 213-229. New York: Routledge
Kundera, M. (1993). *The Joke*. New York: HarperPerennial. (Original work published 1967)
Kuper, S. (2013, December 5). What Mandela taught us. *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/a342e372-5c64-11e3-931e-00144feabdc0
Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Linebaugh, K., & Lee, S. (2022, June 21). 'We are helpless': Indian Heat Wave Hurts Mango Farmers. *Wsj Podcasts*. https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/the-journal/we-are-helpless-indian-heat-wave-hurts-mango-farmers/47b40ffc-64be-47b8-8cf9-de63a9589a40
Mardrus, J. C., & Mathers, E. P. (Trans). (2003-2007). *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (Vols. 1-IV). London: Routledge.
Martin, M. W. (2006). Moral Creativity. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy, 20*(1), 55-66.
Matherne, S. (2016). Kant's Theory of the Imagination. In A. Kind (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination* (pp. 55-68). New York: Routledge.
McBrayer, J. P. (2010). Moral perception and the causal objection. *Ratio*, *23*(3), 291–307.
McGrath, S. (2004). Moral Knowledge by Perception. *Philosophical Perspectives*, *18,* 209–228.
Merrotsy, P. (2013). A Note on Big-C Creativity and Little-c Creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, *25*(4), 474-476.

Mills, C. (2007). White Ignorance. In S. Sullivan and N. Tuana (Eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (pp. 11-38). Albany: State University of New York Press.
Monoskop. (n.d.). Arseny Avraamov. In Monoskop.. Retrieved August 3, 2023, from https://monoskop.org/Arseny_Avraamov
Mulgan, T. (2018). Moral Imaginativeness, Moral Creativity and Possible Futures. In B. Gaut, M. Kieran (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 350 – 368). New York: Routledge
Murakami, H. (2018). *Killing Commendatore* (P. Gabriel, T. Goossen, Trans.). New York: Knopf
Murdoch, I. (1966). The Darkness of Practical Reason. *Encounter*, July 1966, 46-50.
Murdoch, I. (1992). *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London: Random House.
Murdoch, I. (1999). Metaphysics and Ethics. In P. Conradi (Ed.), *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (pp. 59-75). New York: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1957)
Murdoch, I. (1999). Vision and Choice in Morality. In P. Conradi (Ed.), *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (pp. 59-75). New York: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1956)
Murdoch, I. (2001). *The Sovereignty of Good*. New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1970)
Mylonaki, E. (2019). The Individual in Pursuit of the Individual: A Murdochian Account of Moral Perception. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, *53*(4), 579–603.
Nolens, L. (2012). *Manieren van leven: gedichten 1975-2011* [Ways of Living: Poems 1975: 2011]. Amsterdam: Querido.
Novitz, D. (1999). Creativity and Constraint. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *77*(1), 67-82.
Novitz, D. (2003). Explanations of Creativity. In B. Gaut and P. Livingston (Eds.). *The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (pp. 174-191), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Nussbaum, M. (1983). Flawed Crystals: James's The Golden Bowl and Literature as Moral Philosophy. *New Literary History*, *15*(1), 25–50.

Nussbaum, M. (1985). Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Moral Attention and the Moral Task of Literature. *The Journal of Philosophy, 82* (10), 516-529.

Owen, G. E. L. (1960). Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle. Un I. Düring and G. E. L. Owen (Eds.), *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Studia graeca et latina gothoburgensia, XI, Götenborg) (pp. 163–90), Gothenburg: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Panizza, S. (2020). Moral Perception Beyond Supervenience: Iris Murdoch's Radical Perspective. *The Journal of Value Inquiry, 54*(2): 273–288.

Paul E. S, Stokes, D. (2018). Attributing Creativity. In B. Gaut, M. Kieran (Eds.), *Creativity and Philosophy* (pp. 193-209). New York: Routledge,

Paul, E.S., Kaufman, S. B. (Eds.). (2014). *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays*. Oxford, Oxford University Press

Paul, E.S., Stokes, D. (2023). Creativity. In E.N Zalta, U. Nodelman (Eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/creativity/

Picciuto, E., & Carruthers, P. (2014). The origins of creativity. In E.S. Paul, S.B. Kaufman (Eds.), *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays* (199-223). Oxford, Oxford University Press

Plato. (1925). Ion. In W. R. M. Lamb (Trans.), *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (Vol.9). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Plato. (1966). Crito. In H. N. Fowler (Trans.), *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (Vol.1). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Poincaré, H. (2000). Mathematical Creation. *Resonance*, *5*(2), 85-94. (Reprinted from Science et Méthode by H. Poincaré, 1908, Paris: Flammarion)

Proust, M. (2003). *The Guermantes Way: Vol. 3 of Remembrance of Things Past* (C. K. S. Moncrieff, Trans.) Project Gutenberg Australia. (Original work published 1920-1921)

Ratajczyk, Y. (2023). Epiphanies and Moral Creativity. *Journal of Value Inquiry, 57*(1), 185–195.

Ratajczyk, Y. (in press). Moving in a World One Cannot See. In G. Welner, G. Dierckxsens, M. Arienti (Eds.), *The Philosophy of Imagination: Technology, Art, Ethics*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Richards, A. (2021). *The True Story of the Christmas Truce: British and German Eyewitness Accounts from the First World War*. Barnsley: Greenhill Books.

Rohter, L. (2005, August 9). A Writer Whose Posthumous Novel Crowns an Illustrious Career. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/09/books/a-writer-whose-posthumous-novel-crowns-an-illustrious-career.html

Rosenwald, M.S. (2031, September 3). Kenneth Feinberg was asked to do the unthinkable: Assign a value to each life lost that day. *Financial Times*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/021/09/03/worth-kenneth-feinberg-9-11/

Ruane, M. E. (2023, April 16). Christmas 1914 Brought the Men Out of the Trenches and the Slaughter To a Stop. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/christmas-1914-brought-the-men-out-of-the-trenches-and-the-slaughter-to-a-stop/2014/12/24/1949b1ea-8626-11e4-9534-f79a23c40e6c_story.html

Runco, M. A, Pritzker, S. R. (Eds.). (2011) *Encyclopedia of Creativity* (2nd ed.). Boston: Academic Press.

Runco, M. A. (1988). Creativity research: Originality, utility, and integration. *Creativity Research Journal*, *1*(1), 1–7.

Runco, M. A., Jaeger, G. J. (2012). The Standard Definition of Creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, *24*(1), 92-96.

Sainsbury's. (2014, November 12). *1914 | Sainsbury's Ad | Christmas 2014*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWF2JBb1bvM&t=63s

Shakespeare, W. (1912). *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Hazelton: The Electronic Classics Series. (Original work published 1559)

Shelley, B. S. (2016). A Defence of Poetry. In H. A. Needham (Ed.), *Sidney – Apology for Poetry: Shelley – Defence of Poetry* (pp. 65-109). London: Ginn.

Simmermon, J. (2009, July 10). *Pro Se*. [Audio Podcast Episode]. In This American Life. WBEZ Chicago Public Radio. https://www.thisamericanlife.org/385/pro-se/act-

Simonton, D. K. (2003). Scientific `Creativity as Constrained Stochastic Behavior: The Integration of Product, Person, and Process Perspectives. *Psychological bulletin*, *129*(4), 475-494.
Smirnov, A. (2013). *Sound in Z: Experiments in Sound and Electronic Music in Early 20th-century Russia*. London: Koenig Books.
Smith, P. (2010). *Just kids*. London: Bloomsbury.
Smith, P. (2015). *M Train*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Smith, P. (2017). *Devotion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Smith, P. (2019). *Year of The Monkey*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
Statistiek Vlaanderen. (2023, July 7). *Bevolking naar nerkomst* [Population By Origin]. https://www.vlaanderen.be/statistiek-vlaanderen/bevolking/bevolking-naar-herkomst
Steele, W., Hillier, J., Houston, D., Byrne, J., & MacCallum, D. (2018). The Climate-Just City. In T. Jafry (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of climate justice*. Routledge (pp. 279-289). London: Routledge.
Sternberg, R.J. (Ed.). (1999). *Handbook of creativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Stokes, D. (2011). Minimally Creative Thought. *Metaphilosophy*, *42*(5), 658–681.
Stokes, D. (2014). The Role of Imagination in Creativity. In E.S. Paul, S.B. Kaufman (Eds.) *The Philosophy of Creativity* (pp. 157-184). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Stokes, D. (2016). Imagination and Creativity. In Amy Kind (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Imagination* (pp. 247-261). New York: Routledge.
Swanton, C. (2003). Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tatarkiewicz, W. (1980). *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics*. Warsaw: PWN-Polish Scientific Publishers.
The Chopin Piano Competition announces its winner. (2021, October 21). *Gramophone*. https://www.gramophone.co.uk/classical%20music%20news/article/the-chopin-piano-competition-announces-its-winner

The Henry Williamson Foundation. (n.d.) *Henry Williamson and the Christmas Truce*. https://www.henrywilliamson.co.uk/hw-and-the-first-world-war?view=article&id=158:henry-williamson-and-the-christmas truce&catid= 57:uncategorised

Timm, U. 2005. *In My Brother's Shadow. A Life and Death in the SS*. (A. Bell, Trans.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Original work published 2003)

Třešňák, P., Hradilek, A. (2008, October 13). Milan Kundera's denunciation. *Respekt*. https://www.respekt.cz/respekt-in-english/milan-kundera-s-denunciation

Van Wiele, S. (2022, September 1). Antwerps schepen van Cultuur Nabilla Ait Daoud (N-VA) over rel stadsdichter: "Een stadsgedicht is geen politiek manifest." [Alderman of Culture Nabilla Ait Daoud (NVA) About Commotion City Poet: "A City Poem is No Political Manifesto."] *Gazet Van Antwerpen*. https://www.gva.be/cnt/dmf20220901_94004760

Von Helmholtz, H.(1896). *Vorträge und Reden*. Braunscheig: Friederich Vieweg und Sohn.

Wallas, G. (1926). *The Art of Thought*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Weil, S. (2002). *Gravity and Grace*. (E. Crawford, M. von der Ruhr, Trans.). London: Routledge Classics. (Original work published 1947)

Weil, S. 1992. *Waiting for God*. (E. Crawford, Trans.). New York: Harper Perennial. (Original work published 1950)

Wekker, G. (2016). *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Werner, P. J. (2020a). Moral perception. *Philosophy Compass*, *15*(1), 1-12.

Werner, P. J. (2020b). Which Moral Properties Are Eligible for Perceptual Awareness?. *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, *17*(3), 1-30.

Williams, B. (2011). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1985)

Wittkop, G. (2006). *The Necrophiliac* (D. Bapst, Trans.). Toronto: ECW press. (Original work published 1972)

Zagzebski, L. T. (1996). *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Zeman, A., Dewar, M., Della Sala, S. (2015). Lives Without Imagery: Congenital Aphantasia. *Cortex*, *73*, 378-380.