BOOK REVIEW

Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming. By AGNES CALLARD. (Oxford: OUP: 2018. Pp. xiii + 287. Price £41.99.)

Most people change their values over the course of their lives, and do so via the distinctive kind of agency that Agnes Callard calls 'aspiration'. For example, Gina, a college student, wonders whether she should take an elective on music appreciation. Currently, she does not value listening to classical music very much. She has, however, caught glimpses of its value such that she is discontented with her current motivations. She hopes that there is something valuable to gain by taking the course even though she does not know what it is; if she knew, she would already value the thing that she inchoately seeks to value. She signs up. Gina's signing up for the class does not mark her aspirational beginning. Rather, the learning process of aspiration is well underway at this point, and her signing up is a further mark of her agency in the process.

Callard's book is a defence of aspiration's rationality, and it is well written, original, and interesting. She explores the way in which our current thinking about practical rationality, moral psychology, and moral responsibility (the three ethical subdivisions of her book) would have to be revised to make room for aspiration.

In chs. 1 and 2, Callard argues that aspiration such as Gina's can enjoy a certain kind of practical rationality guided by what she calls 'proleptic reasons'—that is, reasons with a proximate face intelligible to Gina now and with a distal face visible fully only to who Gina will become. The relevant kind of rationality, however, is not the sort described by decision theory. Decision theory takes as its input the agent's preferences and their likelihood of being realized, and the output is the course of action that is the best bet for maximization of desire satisfaction. Gina's signing up for music appreciation is irrational from this point of view, because her current desires would be much better satisfied by taking, say, another course in psychology. Callard, however, thinks that decision theory rationality is not the only kind of practical rationality. When agents typically fail to live up to a set of norms (decision theory norms) in a particular domain of agency (aspiration agency), we should be open to the idea that we have not understood that domain's norms, and

this consideration is supposed to make room for the rationality of aspiration (pp. 54, 74). In her concluding chapter, Callard offers an additional argument for the rationality of aspiration based on the rationality of grieving infertility, which decision theorists such as L. A. Paul argue is irrational (pp. 262–276).

In ch. 3, Callard highlights the importance of aspiration by showing the way in which it can resolve intrinsic motivational conflicts. A motivational conflict counts as 'intrinsic' if the agent is divided against herself at the level of her values. Callard argues that Harry Frankfurt's endorsement solution will not work in part because successfully endorsing a desire does not necessarily make the desire any stronger, and so the conflict is not necessarily resolved (p. 140). Successful aspiration, however, does diachronically attenuate or eliminate intrinsic conflict.

In ch. 4, Callard uses the idea of intrinsic conflict to better understand the nature of akrasia. Although this chapter is interesting, it is not about aspiration.

In ch. 5, Callard considers the problem of self-creation that is inspired by the work of Galen Strawson (p. 190): a self-created new value x is either continuous or discontinuous with one's current values. If x is continuous, x is 'entailed' by old values, and so is not a new value. If x is discontinuous, x 'contradict[s] or come[s] at a tangent to the old values', and thus x arises accidentally and is not created by the self. Thus, x is either not a new value or not self-created. Either way, one cannot self-create a new value. Callard rightly points out the false dichotomy in this argument. A person such as Gina can have a partial and inadequate grasp of musical appreciation that she might later come to grasp fully through her efforts to appreciate it (p. 208).

In ch. 6, Callard provides an account of responsibility for the self. An agent is praiseworthy for features of herself if and only if and to the extent that aspiration is part of the explanation for having those features (p. 233). The condition for blameworthiness, however, is asymmetrical, because there is an internal connection between aspiration and good values (p. 242); one cannot, for example, aspire to be a gangster. An agent is blameworthy, then, for features of herself if and only if and to the extent that she has culpably failed to aspire for better ones (p. 236).

This brief summary, of course, cannot do justice to all that is of philosophical interest in the book. In my critical engagement, I focus on her account of responsibility for the self.

No Responsibility? Callard offers no account of the relationship between responsibility for action and the self (p. 246). A plausible view of that relationship is that responsibility for action is fundamental and responsibility for self is derivative, and a plausible necessary condition on derivative responsibility for an outcome (changes to the self, in our case) is that the outcome is foreseen or reasonably foreseeable at the time of action. One might worry that the kind of ignorance that necessarily accompanies aspiration would preclude satisfying even the reasonable foreseeability condition, and so would imply we are not

responsible for ourselves to any degree. Although there are replies that Callard might offer to this argument (see, for example, Fischer and Tognazzini 2009), the main point is that responsibility for self does not run free of responsibility for action.

Too Much Responsibility: Aspiration is initiated via environmental support that puts the agent in touch with a new value: 'Aspiration begins before the aspirant is in a position to exercise agential control over her relation to the value' (p. 64). But because aspiration is sufficient for responsibility for the self (p. 233), it follows that agents are responsible to some marginal degree for lots of early aspiring that do not even involve their agency. This seems like the wrong result precisely because there is no responsibility where there is no agency.

Too Little Responsibility: Paradigm cases of responsibility for the self are cases of self-cultivation (maintaining or strengthening old values). Think, for example, about an agent's becoming more virtuous according to her current values due to putting a self-improvement plan into action. But since cases of self-cultivation are not cases of aspiration (p. 24) and since aspiration is necessary for responsibility for the self (p. 233), the agent could not be responsible for being more virtuous as the result of her self-improvement regimen, which is very counterintuitive.

In spite of these objections, Callard's book is an impressive achievement, and I recommend that it be read widely.

REFERENCE

Fischer, J. M. and Tognazzini, N. A. (2009) 'The Truth About Tracing', *Noûs* 43: 531–56.

University of Gothenburg, Sweden ROBERT J. HARTMAN