

Agents and Achievement

Running a marathon, getting a college degree, writing an excellent philosophy paper, baking a masterful soufflé; these are all achievements. In Gwen Bradford's book *Achievement* she gives an account of what achievements are and what makes them valuable, using a perfectionist perspective which gives value to our special human capacities. The basic structure of the view is that achievements are activities which are sufficiently difficult and competently caused. Both difficulty and competent causation require the use of special human capacities; the will and rationality. Achievements are valuable insofar as they require the excellent exercise of the will and rationality. Generally, I agree with Bradford's view, however it fails to adequately take into account background considerations about agents which go into making achievements difficult. More specifically; it fails to take into account the huge effect that talent, luck, and socioeconomic status have on the ability of persons to exercise perfectionist capacities. This makes her view discount activities that are achievements for some but not others. In this paper I will first explain why we ought to take seriously these background considerations for each agent, complicating the view of difficulty to take into account both long-term and short-term factors which go into making any particular activity difficult. Once we see the importance of agent-specific background conditions, I will suggest a second modification to Bradford's view; that achievements which ameliorate these background considerations for the self or others ought to count as better achievements, as they further the potential for people to exercise their human capacities excellently.

Because this paper primarily deals with the 'difficulty' element of Bradford's theory, I will explain the view of difficulty that Bradford develops. Bradford holds what she calls the Absolute View; "that the amount of intense effort-minutes required for a given activity is the same regardless of the agent" (55). It is absolute in terms of the agent, but relative to the background against which it is being evaluated. Difficulty (d) varies between activities just as it varies when we consider activities in different lights, comparing them in different ways.

She takes into account these differences by introducing the concept of a 'background' for the evaluation of an activity. A background, she says "is the average amount of intense effort (IE) required

for the relevant *kind* of activity” (55) —so an activity is difficult when it is some significant amount more than the average background difficulty for that kind of activity. She makes an additional distinction between types of activities and kinds of activities. She keeps the intuitive meaning of ‘types’ as natural categorizations of activities; board games, marathons, etc. (57) She uses the distinction to give ‘kinds’ of activities a broader scope?; including distinctions such as ‘things to do on a Sunday afternoon’ or ‘things to do on this particular Sunday afternoon.’ Kinds establish the background averages of Intense Effort, which then allow us to complete the calculations of difficulty of particular activities against them. Then the evaluation becomes ‘a is difficult just in case $IE(a) > d_a$ ’, so a is difficult if the intense effort required by a exceeds the background difficulty of an activity like a. In comparing the amounts of intense effort between activities we must take into account the background d for each activity.

Bradford sets out four types of comparisons we could make, keeping these distinctions in mind:

- 1) A comparison between the same type of activity and the same kind of activity. This would take the form $IE(a) > IE(b)$, as the d values would cancel out because they are the same kind of activity with the same background threshold for difficulty. An example of this sort of comparison would be comparing Monopoly and Candy Land. Against the background of the average difficulty of board games, both are quite easy, yet it’s clear to see that Monopoly is more difficult than Candy Land.
- 2) A comparison between different types of activity with the same type of background. The form here is $IE(a) - d_a > IE(b) - d_b$. This is a particularly difficult sort of comparison to make, like comparing the difficulty of backgammon as a board game the difficulty of the Hawaii marathon as a marathon; here we may know [VT1] that backgammon as a board game is of average difficulty, and the Hawaii marathon, as marathons go is relatively easy. However, the intuitions here are hard to sort out, as they are both different difficulties and different backgrounds.
- 3) A comparison between different types, holding the background constant. The form here is $IE(a) - d_a > IE(b) - d_a$. As she notes, this is a pretty common sort of comparison, where we might compare the difficulty of running a marathon to playing backgammon as an activity to do on a Sunday afternoon. Clearly, the sheer difficulty of running a marathon will win out over backgammon in this comparison.

4) A comparison between the same types with different backgrounds. The form here is $IE(a)-d_{1,2} > IE(a)-d_{1,2}$. Bradford labels this as a less common form of comparison, giving the example of comparing backgammon as a game to backgammon as an activity to do this weekend. This is a way of valuing retroactively the different d variables, as the difficulty of playing backgammon is set, though it can be compared on different backgrounds, and is therefore perceived differently in different contexts.

These distinctions are excellent for use in evaluating difficulty between different contexts, however, more needs to be done in order to accurately capture difficulty for specific agents, towards a more inclusive definition of achievement. To show this sort of trouble, let us begin with a story of two teammates, to tease out some of the intuitions which undermine the Absolute View of difficulty that Bradford holds:

Allie and Claire are members of the same university cross country and track team. They are each midway through their college educations, pursuing bachelor's degrees in psychology and nonprofit management respectively. If you went to visit each of their rural hometowns on any given summer day, you'd drive down the same highway, the heat shimmering off a road bordered by an ocean of corn. A not-quite-cool-enough wind would ripple through the stalks as you turned the dial from country music to more country music. After passing through a small town square, a couple of bars, a church or two, you'd head towards a gravel road where the crunching of your tires would alert the family dog that their favorite family member was finally home. But as you open the car door, the sameness of anywhere america comes to a jarring halt, as you realize the extent of difference a family can make in the creation of opportunity. Claire's childhood room is impeccably kept, her walls decorated with tastefully framed pictures of her boyfriend, friends, and family. Her desk has a Ball jar filled with medals from her high school track days, and if you open her desk drawers you will find stacks of accolades for academic decathlon, various volunteering awards, certificates for national honors society functions. With college-educated parents and grandparents, there was no question as to whether she would be attending college; just where. Her junior and senior years of high school included college visits, and frequent conversation at the dinner table, around which her family sat each night after a day of school, work, and sports practice, spending quality

time together, discussing academic and extracurricular endeavors and challenges. Claire spent her childhood essentially training for college; building study skills through AP classes, balancing multiple responsibilities through various activities, interacting with adult authority figures on a regular basis and being taken seriously by them as she was taught to advocate for her needs rather than just obey.

Allie, on the other hand, has no childhood room to look around. Her mother lost her house to bankruptcy during Allie's freshman year of college, and though there is a room for her or any of her four other siblings to sleep in at her dad's farmhouse, none of them had been able to stay in it long, unable to bear his unpredictable temper. Her father has no tolerance for pretension, telling Allie that she is stupid for going to college, as he was able to make a living for himself dropping out of school after 8th grade. Though she competed in track and cross country throughout high school, there was never a ton of support for her athletic endeavors, as her father believed that her energy could be better used on the farm. Her high school courses were not rigorous, rarely requiring her to do any homework, especially as she is quite intelligent, and the majority of boys from her high school did not go on to four year institutions, but took jobs in construction or farming in her hometown or small towns nearby. Though most of the girls she graduated with did end up going to college of some sort, it was never a sure thing, and Allie had to spend a good part of her freshman year adjusting to the routine of studying for classes and being truly challenged in an academic way.

Both Allie and Claire achieve impressive things in college. Each gains a formidable GPA in their respective major, they both train diligently and compete at a high level in athletics, and they build meaningful friendships and social lives which help them and those around them to flourish in college. Though it's hard to quantify these diverse sorts of achievements, there seems to be an intuition that somehow Allie's are a bit more impressive. I think the factor which comes into play here is that she is doing these achievements *despite* her upbringing, rather than because of her upbringing. Every American loves a good rags-to-riches story, I think our general intuitions point to the importance of taking into account the agent's individual capacity to achieve as set up by their background circumstances.

On the Absolute View, we do get to put Allie and Claire's background into the 'background' of the achievement, which will adjust the calculation to determine whether or not graduating from college, for example, would count as an achievement for each of them, as it would show whether the achievement is sufficiently difficult or not. We may even, on the Absolute View, be able to put into the background that it would be an achievement 'for someone like Allie', taking into account some of the general circumstances of rural working-class students. By putting it into the background, it seems that this changes Allie and Claire's achievements. Allie's achievement is now a 'college degree without parent assistance', and Claire's is a 'college degree with parent assistance'. One could choose to alter the judgment in this way, however it is unappealing to do so. Allie and Claire produce the same achievement; a college degree. This achievement functions in a certain way in the world and does specific things within society. When someone views the achievement of a college degree, they see the same thing irrespective of the background producing it. The differentiating factor between degrees is not the background challenges, but the person who experiences those challenges.

It is for this reason that putting the agent's background into the 'background' is doing just that; back-grounding it, rather than foregrounding the relevant pieces of an achievement which make it specifically their own. We don't want to think about an achievement for 'someone like Allie'; we want it to be *Allie* we are dealing with, including and respecting the specificities of her particular life. The view I advocate requires a more agent-specific account of difficulty, which gives a depth to the achievement for the specific agent, taking into account the possible as well as current maximum capacity they have for the activity, taking seriously the temporal element in a person's life which mediates between current and maximum capacity to do any given activity.

In order to account for agents more specifically I will take a view that Bradford proposes, one with more agent specificity with regards to difficulty. Though Bradford rejects it, this 'percentage view' has a lot to offer, as I will show below.

The basic idea behind the percentage view is that there is some maximum capacity that a person has for an activity, and difficulty is measured by the percentage of that maximum capacity at which a

given agent is functioning. If it is a sufficiently high percentage, then the activity is difficult. The first intuition pump Bradford uses to reject this view is the example of the running partners. Betty and Steph are each exerting a significant amount of effort, Steph is at 80% of her maximum possible effort, and Betty is at 60% of her maximum possible effort. On the percentage view, we say that what Steph is doing is more difficult than what Betty is doing, that Steph is achieving more, though they are running the same pace and distance. Bradford claims “that Betty could ultimately expend a greater effort than Steph just isn’t *relevant* for whether or not what she is currently doing is *more difficult*. It just means that she is capable of doing *even more difficult* things.” (53) This seems plausible, if you hold Bradford’s view that there is an absolute difficulty to some activities. However, if you take seriously the proposition of the percentage view, you get to say that the difference between Betty and Steph’s capacities is relevant to their running achievement. Intuitively, this is appealing.

To explore this intuition, let’s give Betty and Steph a different setting for their different running capacities. Betty and Steph are now roommates in their freshman year of college, competing in division 1 cross country. They are both relatively accomplished runners, and train diligently together as members of the same team. Betty is a better runner than Steph, she has run faster times, generally completes the workouts faster, and sees much more success in general when it comes to competition. Steph works equally hard at her training, completing the same races and workouts, albeit a bit slower than Betty, but still trying her best. One day, the team has a race where Betty and Steph each run as fast as they possibly can on that day. Race day performances often do not capture the full potential of an athlete, so you can expend 100% of your effort on that day, and not reach 100% of your potential achievement. Betty has an off-day, and though she has maxed out her effort for that day she is distraught, having run a time of 23 minutes, significantly worse than most of her other times. “Wow, 23 minutes is terrible, I am so slow!” she says to her roommate Steph, tearfully. Steph, however, has had a good day, maxing out her potential effort as well, but achieving a time of 24 minutes, a minute faster than the best time she had ever run prior.

Intuitively, it seems Betty has said something wrong, or at least quite inconsiderate. The time she has run is undeniably slow *for her*, but Steph is very happy to have run a time a full minute slower than that. We should at least think that Betty and Steph's races are equivalently difficult, because each of them has expended 100% of their potential effort. It seems, though, that Bradford's view might not allow for this, as Betty's race is technically more difficult, and more of an achievement because it requires running faster over the same course which seems harder. This is a bit unfair to Steph though, who we feel should be able to enjoy the achievement of improving and running her best time.

Though we may intuitively feel bad for Steph, especially as she has such an inconsiderate roommate, this still isn't necessarily a case for the percentage view, as each runner is expending 100% of their effort on that day, so we are still subject to Bradford's intuitions around the Absolute view; that there is some set difficulty for running at race and it is harder if it is faster. Though there are certainly intuitions in this case regarding Steph's achievement being at least as difficult, we still lean towards thinking Betty has done the more impressive achievement.

Let's change the scenario to push for the percentage intuition. Now Steph and Betty are running the same race in the same time, side by side. This time it is intentional, Betty is 'rabbiting' the race for Steph (This is a pretty common practice in elite running where a faster athlete runs at the desired pace for the race to lead their friend through the first portion of the race. Typically, the 'rabbit' will drop out of the race halfway through or so, but in this example let us say that Betty paces Steph for the whole race). Betty and Steph come through the finish line at 23:30 together, a great time for Steph, but an even slower time for Betty. In fact, Betty doesn't even consider this a race, it is merely a workout for her as it only requires 85% of her potential effort, and though it is a good workout it doesn't count as a race, which is usually signified by 'giving everything you have'. Racing is harder than doing a work-out, and it seems like what Steph has done is more difficult. As they cross the finish line we can even see it in their bodies; when Steph stops she bends over, breathing heavily, her vision a bit blurry, Betty, on the other hand, slows to a jog, still breathing hard, but certainly not doubled over in exhaustion the way that Steph is. This seems to indicate that it *does* matter what Betty's potential maximum effort is, as it has a notable effect on the

actual effort being exerted. It *is* more difficult to give 100% of your effort than it is to give 85% of your effort. Anyone who has attempted to run with someone in better shape than them can attest to this fact. Physical fitness and talent plays a significant role in the ability to exert effort in these cases. Exertion of effort and difficulty are intimately linked, because if you don't feel like you're exerting yourself, then it isn't difficult.

This link between the perception of effort and difficulty is precisely why I find the second intuition pump Bradford uses to reject the percentage view particularly problematic. In this example, Betty is running alone, and for 5 minutes mid-run the Fairy Godmother of Abilities grants her 10 times her original capacity to exert effort. This magical increase in capacity is not perceived by Betty, so she believes that she has exerted the same amount of effort as she would have on a usual run without the magical interference. In fact, though, according to the percentage view this run has been much less difficult than the run she went on yesterday which was the same except for the magical interference, because she was only exercising a small percentage of her maximum potential when it had been heightened by the Fairy. The point is here, I think, that it would mess up the calculation in an unattractive way; one which wouldn't gel with our intuitions about effort, as we like to think that the 6 mile run Betty did today should be the same amount of effort as the 6 mile run Betty did yesterday.

The fact is, however, that the way that effort works wouldn't allow for a non-perceptible increase in capacity. One's ability to exert effort is directly linked to their perception of the amount of effort being exerted, and it cannot be otherwise. If we don't feel we are exerting effort, it cannot be difficult for us. Exertion itself is a perception about the extent to which we are exercising our potential maximum capacities. In this example, specifically, there are physiological facts about the body and what occurs at certain levels of exertion based on overall capacity for the body to do an activity. For example, in running and other endurance sports workouts are often evaluated in relation to one's VO2 max. This is a scientific and concrete measure of the maximal amount of oxygen your body is able to extract from your blood during vigorous exercise. Though VO2 maxes range between athletes, and the higher your VO2 max is the longer you are able to go at a harder pace, every athlete perceives performance as their VO2 max to be

difficult. When your body is extracting the maximum amount of oxygen from your blood it is working hard and there is no way not to perceive that. Accordingly, the perception of effort up to that max is pretty consistent, the harder your body works, the harder it feels. Consequently, the idea that Betty would not be able to feel the increase in ability seems completely out of line with the way that capacity, effort, and difficulty actually work, especially in a physiological context. Though mental toughness and ability certainly plays a role in your ability to physically perform and can make things feel (and therefore actually be) harder or easier. If you were magically granted with a greater capacity to run, *you would feel it.*

One worry with the close relation I have drawn here between perception of difficulty and difficulty itself, where perceiving that something is difficult for you and that you are exerting effort is necessary to its being difficult is that we could fall into some subjectivist, or at least epistemologically murky hole. We don't like to allow the agent to determine what *feels* difficult to them, it seems unreliable and inaccessible, and therefore bad news philosophically. However, in many cases, like the one above, we actually possess quite good methods of determining effort scientifically. We have ways of measuring different stressors and exertions, and we have ways of seeing how certain activities physically deplete the body; signifying difficulty. Obviously, the reduction of difficulty to scientific measurement is not what I am advocating for here, as the likelihood of us being able to fully scientifically measure this concept seems unlikely, but it eases the epistemological worry a bit.

Along with the epistemological worry, there is an added complication, given that we measurably do have different capacities from one another, is *why* we do. There are a range of reasons that we all possess different capacities for different things, many of them rely purely on the randomness of genetics; however, in this case of Betty and Steph it is easy to isolate two possible reasons for difference in capacity, which have an effect on our view of difficulty. Talent and training have an interesting interplay in the athletic world. We could imagine two different states of affairs, one in which Betty is simply more athletically talented than Steph, and another in which Betty trains more and harder than Steph, who shares her level of talent.

In the case that Betty is more talented than Steph, each workout she completes is more athletically fruitful; her body heals faster, she has more fast-twitch muscles, her gait is incredibly efficient, etc. But because Betty is so much more talented than Steph, it happens to be the case that she can actually train half as hard as Steph, and achieve more than her. Putting in fewer efforts and also causing her running achievements significantly less competently. She is achieving less, one might think, on the percentage view, because she is less excellently exercising her will and rationality. However, Bradford would lead us to believe that because the activity Betty is doing is harder on some absolute scale, she is achieving more than Steph who is diligently training, putting her full effort into workouts, planning out her meals, thinking about her races ahead of time, and so on. It seems clear to me that if Betty is sufficiently more talented than Steph, it may be the case that Steph is actually achieving more than Betty, though her times may not show it.

In the second case, however, where the reason that Betty is able to exert more effort than Steph is that she has trained for longer and works harder than her counterpart, we think differently. Clearly here the amount of effort behind each achievement will be different. To go back to the original case where the pair goes on a run together, where Betty is exerting only 60% effort and Steph 80%, the reason that Betty only needs to exert 60% of her total possible effort is that she has expended so much effort already training to get to this point. Let's say that both of the women are training for a marathon, and Betty has started her training in January, whereas Steph neglected to run until April. On the day of their training run together, though Betty is only exerting 60%, really, if we are looking at the broader achievement it is clear that she has had a much larger net exertion of effort. This seems to indicate that if we are to take the percentage view seriously we may need to complicate it a little, as the current possible maximum effort is determined in some way by previous effort exerted, and an overall maximum potential for effort. This more complicated view, which I think would be necessary to incorporate if we are to take the percentage view seriously, would have to include some interplay between effort and talent, for lack of better terms. For any given activity, each person has a total maximum capacity to expend effort at it, and

they have a current maximum capacity- the amount of effort they are able to put forth for that activity today.

How these capacities would be determined, especially for a certain individual, is incredibly unclear. To tie this back to the first example of Allie and Claire, who face very different challenges in pursuing their university degrees and athletic endeavors, we ought to give a special value to the net effort Allie has had to exert in overcoming her background circumstances, not necessarily by adding to the difficulty, as her current capacity to complete her assignments and run could easily be the same as Claire's, however, the fact that she wasn't always supposed to be there, that she has overcome some odds in doing what she is doing ought to have a special weight. Additionally, the fact that it was *she* who overcame these odds, which were specifically hers, needs to be taken into account.

Perfectionism holds that those capacities which are specifically human are intrinsically valuable. Though it doesn't necessarily follow, it seems that there is also something intrinsically valuable about a specific person's capacities; the things which make them unique, which make their challenges their challenges and accordingly their achievements their achievements. The depth and richness of a human life is an important feature of humanity; this means that specific challenges ought to be taken into account, and specific agents ought to as well. We hold that achievements are good, and that they are good for people. It is good for people to achieve things. My main issue with Bradford's account is that it simultaneously fails to account for the mundane-seeming achievements of people who are particularly challenged (those who live in impoverished countries, for example, for whom getting water and food each day requires a significant degree of effort and competent causation).

Keeping these challenges in mind, and noting that many of those who do not face these challenges, including many of ourselves, the global rich and relatively privileged, it seems important to consider the value of achievements in a less strictly perfectionist view. Perfectionists see virtue as loving the good, which involves the excellent exercise of our special human capacities. There is a good argument for a third capacity beyond just rationality and the will, which she says are the capacities which go into achievements; this third capacity is empathy. We could see empathy on a perfectionist view and the

appropriate response to the recognition of the special human capacities in others. Below, I give an account of how this third perfectionist capacity could be included in Bradford's view to give some extra weight to those achievements which alleviate the challenges to others experiencing the good.

Bradford engages this concept to a certain degree with her explanation of *amare bonum bonus*; to love the good is good. The concept is useful to her theory in that it helps to identify the value of the process in non-zero product achievements. It tells us that the process to get to a good product is good, but it can also tell us, conveniently for her issue of petty evil achievements, that the process of pursuing the bad can still be good in itself. This is achieved through an organic unity view, where the parts that make up the achievement; the pursuit and the product, retain their original valence. In the case of an art heist, this would mean that the product would have a negative value, but the process would have a positive value, as it required excellent exercise of the will and rationality. On the type of organic unity that Bradford argues for, *amare bonum bonus* allows us to account for the value of the whole on the whole. This means that not only do we add together the product, which has a small negative value here, and the process, which here has a high positive value, but also the value of the achievement as a whole, which here, again, would still be negative as the pursuit is of the bad. In this case, you are not just taking the value of the whole, which is negative, but the value of a whole *as a whole*, which still includes the independent values of the constitutive parts, and thereby gives a generous weight to the goodness of the pursuit in itself, which was an achievement. This means that the achievement of the petty evil art heist is a small net positive, an achievement. Somewhat sneakily, Bradford has gotten around the problem of petty evil achievements, however I believe this may have some problematic implications on a broader scale.

Let us look at another pair of University students, both pursuing majors in sociology. They have exerted equal effort in gaining their degrees, engaging with a range of sociological research projects and frequently applying the social theory they have learned throughout their coursework to current events, and to their lives. One, however, let's call her Alice, has really take to heart the things which she has learned in sociology about inequality. She looks at the world and think about all of the circumstances which lead people to be unable to excellently exercise their human capacities, so many of them caused by macro

processes that little if nothing to do with the agents themselves. After some job-shadowing and aptitude testing, she learns that she is well-equipped to be a high school counselor, and she is also well-equipped to be a corporate financial strategist.

The other, let's call him Alex, has also incorporated his sociological knowledge into his life. He is just as aware that inequality plagues the world, preventing many people from excellently exercising their human capacities, and, going through the same process Alice also discovers that he is well-equipped to become either a high school counselor or a corporate financial strategist.

Both Alex and Alice are well-informed about the two job courses. They know that being a high school counselor is challenging, it requires an incredible amount of stamina, as well as a considerable exercise of rationality. It's not a high paying job, and it's likely that they will not be highly respected for their work, even though it is incredibly valuable to society. They will, however, still be able to live comfortable lives, which would allow them to support families. They are also aware that High school counselors often have a huge impact on the success of students in post-high school pursuits. In fact, being a high school counselor nearly guarantees that you will have some positive effect on the ability of others to pursue achievements that excellently exercise the will and rationality.

On the other hand, being a corporate financial strategist has nearly no effect on others' ability to pursue achievements. Most of the money being managed is held by the top one percent of society, who have all of their basic needs met, and the job requires moving the money around to gain the most out of investment. The job will, however, still require lots of stamina and excellent exercise of the will on the part of Alice and Alex, it's a difficult job, and doing well at it is undeniably an achievement. That it's an achievement is clearly demonstrated in the generous paychecks, which will allow Alice and Alex to live quite luxurious lives.

Alice, having taken to heart the things she learned in her education, chooses to be a high school counselor, devoting her career to helping others. Alex, though he knows that he could do more good for others equally well by becoming a counselor also chooses to pursue corporate finance, using his sociological knowledge to better manage companies internally, rooting out redundancies.

In broad American society, ten years down the line, society tends to view Alex as having achieved more than Alice. Certainly, his bank account boasts a higher balance, he wears nice watches, hobnobs with the political and financial elite, and has a wall full of accolades in his office which say things like “Corporate Issuer of the Year” or “Equity Deal of the Year”. By a number of standards, we may think that he has achieved more. Alice, however, over those same ten years has assisted over a hundred first generation college students in getting into four year universities, staying in touch with many of them throughout their academic careers. Her office is decorated with graduation pictures and she has a drawer full of honest thank you notes.

Even if, over those ten years, Alice and Alex have expended the exact same amount of effort, and exercised their rational capacities to the exact same degree, there is some intuition that nudges us to think that maybe, though it’s less visible, Alice’s achievement is somehow better. *Amare bonum bonus* here doesn’t quite capture it. It’s not as if there is anything negative about Alex’s life. He’s not doing anything (explicitly or directly) evil. His achievements are impressive, as well, just as impressive, in terms of our two factors that determine the value of achievement, as those of Alice. Alice’s achievements, however, have a special quality; they beget other achievements. Specifically, through the amelioration of the inequality in capacities that people have to pursue the excellent exercises of the will and rationality that one pursues through a college or technical degree.

The strict perfectionist will argue that this is a consequentialist view. Though it’s true there is a good consequentialist justification here, one can accept the view without being a consequentialist. If you hold that what is good is the excellent exercise of the special human capacities, it’s logical to suppose that you would find something which helps the flourishing of those capacities in others would also be good. It requires the exercise of empathy, and the appropriate response to the good in others, by respecting and nurturing (when possible) their special human capacities. There are two ways that we could argue the perfectionist should value these helping achievements. The first is that if we hold the capacities as valuable in ourselves, then taking actions to protect and nurture those capacities in others should be at least instrumentally valuable. The second way we can argue for the value of these achievements for the

perfectionist is that respecting and nurturing the special human capacities in others requires the excellent exercise of empathy, which is also a perfectionist capacity. Bearing this in mind, an achievement which increases the special human capacities in others ought to have some extra weight.

It seems that the perfectionist ought to, or at least could reasonably hold this view, because they would hold the view that an achievement which increases one's capacity to excellently exercise the human capacities in oneself ought to have special weight. Here let's go back to the training example from earlier in the paper. When we looked at Betty and Steph in the case where they were equally talented but Betty had trained longer and harder than Steph had, we took that fact into account. When we looked at them running together, Betty at 60% of her possible effort for that day and Steph at 80%, we thought that though Steph seemed to be working harder on that day, Betty had the more impressive achievement, because she had expended a larger net amount of effort, which had increased her capacity to do difficult tasks. This increase in capacity has a value in itself, which gives her percentage a boost on new percentage view. The capacity to increase our capacities is in itself a perfectionist capacity; the will. Why the will is only especially valuable when applied to oneself and not other humans; willing to increase their perfectionist capacities rather than one's own, is a question I am not sure how perfectionism would answer.

Even if perfectionism can't have a justification for giving weight to achievements that increase others capacity to achieve that fits nicely within its own value theory, there is a good enough case to give extra weight by appealing to mere intuition, as well as consequentialism, that I think it could be added on to the theory without too much discord.

Overall, I take Bradford's account of achievements to be a valuable and mostly accurate one, capturing a lot of what it means to achieve something, and what makes it valuable. My two main alterations stem from intuitions about inequality between persons. First, that we ought to have an account of achievement which captures the specific challenges of the individual, and second that we ought to have space in that account, using the human quality of empathy to give extra weight to those achievements which encourage the flourishing of human capacities in others. I believe that these modifications to

Bradford's position deepens the account of achievement to make it more intuitively attractive and theoretically equitable.