Research Article

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Value, Virtue, and Vivienne Westwood: On the Philosophical Importance of Fashion

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Abstract: In the aforementioned quote, Vivienne Westwood sketches a role for fashion that elevates it from the prosaic to the status of art, as something important, life-enhancing, and worthy of pursuit. Here, a philosophical treatment of Westwood's vision of fashion that does justice to the artistic and life-enhancing value that fashion can realise is offered, using an emergent theory in contemporary analytic aesthetics. The virtue theory of art delineates the intrinsic worth of art in terms of the opportunities it provides for us to exercise and cultivate virtues such as courage, self-expression, imagination, wit, or authenticity. Our engagement with art can subsequently be genuinely life-enhancing in lieu of the constitutive role the virtues play in living well. The present study takes Westwood's claims as a jumping-off point, considering how they speak not just to her own designs but to our relationship with our clothes more broadly. Fashion is defended as a practice that performs this function in analogous ways to other genres of art and thus has clear artistic value as well as enables us to live well. Given this potential, just as Westwood claimed, there are reasons to perform the practice well because it has importance for the ways in which it can realise artistic value and aid us in living well.

Keywords: fashion, virtue, aesthetic value, art, style, well-being

Fashion is very important.
It is life-enhancing and, like everything that gives pleasure,
it is worth doing well.
— Vivienne Westwood

1 Introduction

The late Vivienne Westwood proved to be a figure who would consistently turn conventions in fashion on their head, whilst coming to define and shape the institution itself. She is perhaps best remembered for the way in which she would salvage traditional trends, materials, and techniques and mould them into something radical and forward-looking, often imbued with contemporary socio-political concerns that were characteristic of her approach to designing. In the above quote, Westwood sketches a role for fashion that elevates it from the prosaic to the status of art, as something important, life-enhancing, and worthy of pursuit. Here, a philosophical treatment of Westwood's vision of fashion that does justice to the artistic and life-enhancing value that fashion can realise is offered, using an emergent theory in contemporary analytic aesthetics. The virtue theory of art delineates the intrinsic worth of art in terms of the opportunities it provides for us to exercise and cultivate virtues such as courage, self-expression, imagination, wit, or authenticity. Our engagement with art can subsequently be genuinely life-enhancing owing to the constitutive role the virtues play in living well. The present study takes Westwood's claims as a jumping-off point, considering how they speak not just to her own designs but to our relationship with our clothes more broadly. Fashion is defended as a practice that performs

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this function in analogous ways to other genres of art and thus has clear artistic value as well as enabling us to live well. Given this potential, just as Westwood claimed, there are reasons to perform the practice well because it has importance for the ways in which it can realise artistic value and aid us in living well. The plan will be to outline the scope of the article, before considering an existent philosophical approach to enfranchising clothing in the aesthetic arena by situating it in the sphere of everyday aesthetics. The virtue theoretic approach is presented as a desirable alternative to its ordinary aesthetics counterpart. When imported into virtue aesthetics, fashion emerges with all the attributes Westwood assigns to it, and as a worthy candidate for artistic value.

2 Preliminaries

Numerous philosophers have noticed philosophy's disparagement of fashion, offering various explanations of this apparent antipathy between the two. Karen Hanson argues that fashion deserves philosophical treatment and posits that fashion's neglect by philosophy is not so much due to political concerns such as how fashion might perpetuate gender norms and class divides, or even moral concerns about unethical production (concerns about fast fashion have become increasingly prevalent in public discourse around fashion), but to the nature of philosophy. Hanson argues that philosophy is interested in "lasting truths and enduring values" and that fashion, on the other hand, is inherently committed to change and innovation.[1] In the case of Westwood, we might think it is a hallmark of her work that her collections are inventive and Avant Garde, recycling past trends in clothing to create something new. Westwood advocated for aesthetic change and even socio-political change using her designs, claiming to use her fashion "to get people involved in politics" and raise awareness about corruption and sustainability.[2] However, there is plenty of philosophical work on the Avant Garde with conceptual art and ready-mades remaining a lasting philosophical puzzle.[3] Aesthetics is clearly capable of engaging with the provocative and the innovative, and it has also embraced more contemporary and popular kinds of media into central aesthetic debates including television shows,[4] street art,[5] and video games.[6] In his article exploring historical philosophical perspectives on fashion, Nickolas Pappas argues that it is not so much the commitment to transience, change, and innovation that has put philosopher's off from taking fashion seriously, but the perceived imitativeness or "social obedience" associated with fashion.[7] This is to say, the concern is not that fashion is ever-changing, but the fact that we are so willing to change with it. Pappas critiques this view of fashion as a one-sided characterisation of a practice that involves both assimilation and differentiation, in essence identifying fashion with the various ways in which people use clothing to fit into communities at the expense of the myriad of ways we use fashion to differentiate ourselves from others.

Whether the issue historically has been its perceived capriciousness or its imitativeness, fashion continues to be overlooked in contemporary analytic aesthetics. Rather than speculate on why this has historically been the case, which would most likely involve generalisation or oversimplification, it might be worth attending to an argument one could make that might compel us to keep fashion out of contemporary debates in philosophy of art. What often motivates discussions of art and its value is the intuition that art is valuable for its own sake; art is intrinsically valuable. Conversely, fashion is often associated with a plethora of extrinsic motivations like exhibiting social status, protecting us from the elements, or allowing us to fit into a group. These sorts of

1 Hanson, "Dressing down Dressing up," 109.

2 Westwood, "The World According to Vivienne Westwood, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/05/opinion/vivienne-westwood-environment-politics-activism.html.

3 For example, see Carroll, "Avant-Garde Art and the Problem of Theory;" and Goldie and Schellekens, *Who's Afraid of Conceptual Art?*.

4 Vidmar Janovic, "Fiction, Philosophy, and Television," 76–87.

5 Bacharach, "Street Art and Consent," 481–95.

6 Nguyen, "Games and the Art of Agency," 423–62.

7 Pappas, *Fashion Seen as Something Imitative and Foreign*, 11.

pragmatic reasons might lend credence to the idea that art is only ever of instrumental worth, and so lacks the requisite intrinsic value for art. If fashion is incapable of realising intrinsically valuable artistic value, then we could argue that fashion is an inappropriate subject for philosophy of art without needing to locate any antipathy in proposed features of either fashion or philosophy.

This article argues that there is in fact a route to establishing the non-instrumental value of fashion which not only motivates its enfranchisement in aesthetics, but also allows us to explore the potential ethical and artistic values at play in our relationships with fashion. The theoretical framework invoked here is an emergent theory of artistic value in contemporary analytic aesthetics known as the virtue theory. On this view, the value of art is centred on its role in affording us opportunities to exercise and cultivate intrinsically valuable virtues of character, which are labelled "artistic virtues." The article identifies space within this approach for thinking about how fashion might allow us to develop artistic virtues and where we can recognise and appreciate artistic value. In addition to this, the virtue theoretic approach would also give us a way of understanding the life-enhancing potential of fashion, since cultivation of artistic virtues is a constitutive element of a life well-lived.

Before going forward, it will be crucial to clarify what kind of understanding of "fashion" is being used here. Pappas glosses "the core sense of fashion" as that which "has to do with clothes, shoes, and other wardrobe accessories"[8] which he sees as a narrow but ultimately workable sense of fashion. The notion of fashion this article employs is broader and less object-orientated. Fashion will here refer more to our relationship with clothing, what we do with it and what we appreciate about it. It will capture not only our ways of dressing or styling ourselves but also the appreciation we can take in garments that we might not wear for reasons as diverse as lacking financial resources or a garment being a museum artefact. Thus, the value here is located not in the object itself but in our relationship with these garments. We can realise artistic value not only in the way we create outfits or design piece of clothing, but also in how we would appreciate an artwork for its merits. In this way, the project is aligned with equivalent experience-orientated accounts of art that are found in the work of Alan H. Goldman or Alexander Nehemas, for example.[9] The creation and appreciation we exercise in fashion thus mirrors that which we undertake in other artforms like literature, music, and film.

3 Westwood

Born in 1941 in Derbyshire, Westwood's early life was spent working as a primary school teacher whilst designing and making jewellery on the side. After meeting her partner and creative collaborator, Malcolm McLaren, Westwood left teaching and opened her first shop with McLaren on the King's Road in Chelsea in 1971. Cycling through various iterations before becoming the renowned *Worlds End*, the shop was closely intertwined with the punk movement, not least because of McLaren's work managing *The Sex Pistols*. The pieces designed and sold by Westwood and McLaren became a visual manifesto for the punk movement, with garments that challenged established conventions of dressing and that were fiercely subversive and shocking. Their designs rebelled against standard practices of clothing production, deliberately leaving seams exposed, adding rips to textiles, joining material with safety pins, and using open-knitted textures which would put the wearer's body on display in a way that not only challenged ideas about how clothes should be made, but also challenged the very idea of what clothing should be. Fashion was no longer just about protecting oneself from the elements: it was an overt political statement. Westwood's early visual vocabulary utilised pictures of Queen Elizabeth I and Karl Marx mixed with anarchist and fascist symbolism, designed unabashedly to jolt and disturb.

8 Ibid., 1.

9 See Goldman's, "The Experiential Account of Aesthetic Value," 2006; or Alexander Nehemas', *Only the Promise of Happiness*, 2010, for accounts that ground the value of art in the kinds of experiences or relationships it can afford us.

Since then, Westwood continued to cultivate an eclectic bank of references that incorporates eighteenth-century men's clothing, traditional tartan and tweed textiles, and bondage wear. A consistent motif in her work is the incorporation and inversion of tradition to create something contemporary and critical, such as her frequent use of corsets or her take on the Victorian crinoline which truncated the skirt into a conventional mini skirt. The "Mini-Crini" toyed with ideas of modesty and propriety in women's fashion whilst also recasting the old as something radically new and now serves as a classic example of Westwood's penchant for mixing new silhouettes with traditional fabrics.

Westwood has insisted open the political dimension of fashion, and has produced collections that address issues such as fascism, capitalism, climate change, animal rights, and British conservativism. Of late, Westwood became particularly concerned with sustainability, a theme which emerged in her 2007 manifesto written for *The Guardian*: "Active Resistance to Propaganda."[10] In the manifesto, Westwood constructs a dialogue between a diverse cast of characters including Lewis Carroll's Alice, Pinocchio, Aristotle, and Diogenes that criticises the contemporary art world as a space controlled by capitalist interests that allow banality and self-interest to thrive. Her latest collections frequently incorporated political messages, such as her 'Save the Arctic' t-shirt range from 2014 or her use of 'YES' badges in her SS15 Runway collection to signal her support for Scottish independence in the referendum.

Westwood is someone who demonstrated throughout her life and work a keen appreciation of the importance fashion can have in our ethical, political, and aesthetic lives. She took inspiration from the Aristotelian conception of happiness as fulfilling human potential, associating it with the punk creed which she viewed as "young people figuring out what they wanted from this world."[11] Whilst a full study of her work is beyond the scope of this particular project, the plan for this article is to expound and defend the perspective on fashion that Westwood promotes. Her view of fashion as something life-enhancing, as intertwined with our ethical and political lives, and as a means through which we can explore virtues like creativity, imagination, and originality, will be developed in the following sections within the context of an artistic virtue theoretic framework. When fashion is imported into this aesthetic schema, it emerges that all these features of fashion tie in to both the artistic value of fashion and the value of it in the context of our well-being. Dressing well becomes a way in which we can live well.

4 Dirty Clothes

Before turning to a model of fashion as valuable for the role it plays in exercising and cultivating virtue, I will briefly consider an existent approach to thinking about clothes that has been discussed in relation to ordinary aesthetics. Ultimately, the ordinary aesthetic approach is well-equipped to explain how fashion can relate to our moral and political lives, particularly at it pertains to sustainability, but it fails to adequately account for the sense in which fashion might be intrinsically valuable for its artistic merits. It focuses on the quiet aesthetic pleasure we might gain from clothes in a quotidian sense, but not on the more overt joy and attention we gain and pay to our clothes. The life-enhancing value of fashion that the article seeks to defend is not exhausted by the kind of aesthetic value that the ordinary aesthetic approach sets out.

Whilst discussions of fashion have not featured prominently in the analytic philosophy of art, there is work in the field of everyday aesthetics conducted by Yuriko Saito on the subject of clothing. Saito argues for the inclusion of various everyday practices in the domain of aesthetic consideration and relevant to the present discussion is her work on laundry. Saito's approach has some commonalities with the approach I intend to develop, including her claim that the locus of aesthetic value is in our relationship to and experience of the garments, as opposed to being found within the garments themselves. Further, her intention is to defend

10 Westwood, "Active Resistance to Propaganda," https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/may/12/fashion.features4.

11 Westwood, "All Hail the One, the Only, Dame Vivienne Westwood," https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/7xvv34/all-hail-the-one-the-only-dame-vivienne-westwood.

the potential value of our interaction with garments as aesthetic, not just in terms of the garments utility. A utilitarian approach might explain the value of the pleasure we take in clothing as something that could lead to happiness or even the ethical dimension of fashion as something that generates moral responsibilities around, say, the continued use of fur in fashion[12] or fast fashion, but this would be a different sort of value to the characteristic intrinsic value associated with art.[13]

Saito goes about "enfranchising [laundry] in the aesthetic arena"[14] and believes that "we can experience the ordinary activity in its ordinariness and familiarity without lifting it out of the mundane as a standout, extra-ordinary moment"[15] whilst still experiencing a genuinely aesthetic experience in the process. According to Saito, many of the considerations that factor into our laundry practices are of an aesthetic nature and go beyond the simple utilitarian concern with cleanliness. Saito notes that we are concerned about preserving the colours, textures and fit of our clothes, and often separate colours or use specific products for this end. We avoid drying certain textiles in the dryer for fear of shrinking garments, and we dry some garments outside to enhance their smell or texture. These represent ways in which the motivations behind the decisions we make when doing laundry outstrip functional concerns. A coffee stain on a beloved white blouse does not impede the functionality of it; my desire to remove the stain is motivated by concerns regarding how the blouse looks. As such "there is no denying that these are all aesthetic considerations insofar as they are concerned with the sensuous appearance of the objects: the look, feel, and smell of the laundered items."[16] There is thus a distinctly aesthetic dimension to doing laundry, even if it is often accompanied or eclipsed by practical matters. What we can gain from an aesthetic point of view from laundry is a "quiet pleasure" and "subtle" delight which, whilst it is often "hidden in plain sight," can be attended to in ways that bring it to the fore.[17] Such experiences are "woven into the fabric of daily life."[18] Intuitively, if there can be aesthetic experiences associated with the washing of clothes that transcend simply practical reasons, then there is the possibility that the wearing of clothes, not just the washing of them, could exhibit similar aesthetic features.

The particular conception of everyday aesthetics that Saito is operating within seeks to embrace the mundane:

> I locate the core of everyday aesthetics in the ordinary experienced as ordinary: the quiet, unarticulated aesthetic satisfaction interwoven with the flow of daily life.[19]

Whilst the ordinary account is equipped to assign some aesthetic value to our interaction with clothing, by virtue of the aesthetic interest we show in clothes and the subsequent satisfaction we take from them, the theory accentuates the quotidian side of dressing at the expense of the more pronounced artistic value we can gain from clothing. The joy and aesthetic interest taken in clothes by many people is neither subtle nor unarticulated, but involves a great deal of thought, care, and contemplation that is often very clear and present to the wearer. The value of clothing set out in Westwood's vision of fashion or the punk movement does not seem to be a quiet or subtle pleasure, but an overt and vital part of our lives that realises the kind of value we tend to assign to art. As *The Economist* put it in their obituary for Westwood, her designs were about producing clothes that "enhanced the experience of life" using "fabric that lasted and became a treasure."[20]

Perhaps we might say that the Westwood or punk characterisation is more of an anomaly and that Saito's quiet pleasure is a more appropriate story to tell about the majority of our experiences with clothes. It may not be that Saito's ambitions for fashion are too meagre, but that Westwood's vision goes too far. However, it does

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12 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2015.

13 For a discussion of the ethical and aesthetic considerations relating to fast fashion, see Saito, 2018.

14 Saito, "The Aesthetics of Laundry," 115.

15 Ibid., 118.

16 Ibid., 120.

17 Ibid., 122.

18 Ibid., 123.

19 Ibid., 124.

20 "Vivienne Westwood sowed never-ending revolution all through the fashion world," https://www-economist-com.libproxy.kcl.ac.uk/obituary/2023/01/11/vivienne-westwood-sowed-never-ending-revolution-all-through-the-fashion-world.

seem that many of us take pleasure in fashion that goes beyond unarticulated satisfaction. The sheer amount of consideration and care that we can put into our personal style speaks to this, as does the wealth of attention paid to events like the Met Gala or fashion weeks. Equally, the growing movement of exhibitions in galleries centring on fashion such as the 2004 V&A retrospective of Westwood's career, curated by Claire Wilcox, suggests that we increasingly attribute a status to the designing and making of clothes that transcends the everyday and the utilitarian. There is evidently something more than the prosaic that we should account for when analysing fashion, and it is here that the ordinary aesthetics approach misses the mark.

5 Virtue and Value

A recent cluster of theories have argued for an account of artistic value that is broadly Aristotelian in kind. They contend that engaging with art can be an intrinsically valuable experience and that this value can be constitutive of human well-being or flourishing; these are dubbed Neo-Aristotelian theories.[21] In contrast to Saito's approach, the Neo-Aristotelian account offers theoretical resources that neatly explain how our relationship to fashion and our ways of dressing can realise not only the kind of intrinsic value that we associate with art, but also the kind of artistic value that would be genuinely life-enhancing.

The neo-Aristotelian framework in aesthetics has been developed most fully by Peter Goldie and Matthew Kieran, but it has been defended by others.[22] The theory starts with the claim that there are a set of virtues which share the same basic structure to the familiar moral and intellectual virtues, but which are exercised and developed through our engagement with art. The artistic virtues are valuable for their own sake, which grounds the intrinsic worth of creating and appreciating artworks. The virtue theorist hopes to establish the non-instrumental value of art as well as some kind of objectivity for our aesthetic judgements by providing standards for artistic appreciation that transcend subjective liking.

Peter Goldie argued that the artistic, intellectual, and moral virtues all share an elemental structure, despite some idiosyncrasies associated with each set of virtues. Any type of virtue is an excellent character trait that is "deep and enduring" and reliably manifested in behaviour "consistently across a wide scope of situations."[23] To this, Matthew Kieran adds that something can be considered a virtue only if our approbation is grounded in the activity understood as a feat of character, and not for any other good it might yield. Artistic virtues are simply these kinds of dispositions but developed in the specific context of producing or appreciating art. Potential candidates for these virtues include, but are not limited to, imagination, insight, sensibility, vision, creativity, wit, authenticity, integrity, intelligence, persistence, open-mindedness, and courage.[24]

Goldie and Kieran share a commitment to a certain unity of the virtues. We see this explicitly in Goldie's claim that there is a shared conceptual repertoire and overlap in our use of concepts across the domains of the intellectual, ethical, and artistic. Goldie held that thick concepts which we associate with their usage in ethics, such as brave, brutal, sensitive, or honest, can also be applied to intellectual or artistic cases, something we find also in Iris Murdoch's work.[25] He writes:

21 The dichotomy of Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Moorean accounts of virtue aesthetics is developed by Lopes (Lopes, "Virtues of Art," 197–211). Lopes wants to establish good taste as an intrinsically valuable virtue but offers an alternative to the Neo-Aristotelian model. On the Neo-Moorean model, the intrinsic value of good taste is derived from the intrinsic value of beauty, which is taken as basic to the theory. The present article deals exclusively with the Neo-Aristotelian iterations of virtue aesthetics since the aim of the article is to expand on the "life-enhancing" qualities of fashion, which is best situated in discussions where well-being is involved.

22 Neo-Aristotelian virtue aesthetics has also been defended by Anil Gomes (Gomes, "Goldie on the Virtues of Art," 75–81); and Tom Roberts (Roberts, "Aesthetic Virtues," 429–47) and also has its roots in Iris Murdoch.

23 Goldie, "Virtues of Art," 832.

24 Ibid., 187.

25 Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 2001.

> We can as readily call the brushstrokes in an artwork brutal or the philosophical argument crude as we can call the action of a generous person fine.[26]

Thus, what we tend to think of as ethical virtues such as integrity or honesty are not simply limited to the ethical sphere but "have application across the whole field of human activity."[27] Kieran emphasises the role that motivation plays, which is crucial in distinguishing artistic virtue from mere skill. Intuitively, we might think that being able to paint imaginatively or write intelligently are merely skills, which are valued instrumentally – as a means to an end. To safeguard the proposed virtues from this worry, the virtue theorist must demonstrate that artistic virtues are intrinsically valuable and can thus play a role in living well, which Kieran grounds in the appreciation or creation of an artwork for its own sake. The right motivation for cultivating virtue in artistic cases is to be "acting out of a desire to realize what makes something valuable under the relevant description in the given domain" which in the case of art might look like engaging with the artwork in order to realise "self-expression" or to "cultivate understanding."[28] Kieran terms this *intrinsic motivation* and contrasts it with *extrinsic motivation* which involves being motivated by concerns like social status which is extraneous to the concept of art. Only intrinsic motivation can account for the kind of consistency and reliability we expect of a virtue, and this kind of reliability and resistance to vice is what makes it praiseworthy and admirable. The extrinsically motivated person, such as the snob, is unlikely to exhibit the same consistency either in their artistic outputs or in their creation. An undergraduate deriving value from reading Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* because they believe it will make them seem cool and well-read to their peers lacks the right kind of motivation for virtue and they will only develop artistic virtue and thus have an intrinsically valuable experience if they appreciate the book because of the kinds of intrinsically valuable virtues it allows them to cultivate and exercise.

In the case of the snob, who is taken to be paradigmatically vicious, Kieran notes that we tend to think even if the snob arrives at a reasonable artistic judgement (e.g. that *The Bell Jar* conveys profound insight about what it is like to suffer with a mental illness or that the prose is rich and lyrical), their judgement is epistemically unreliable, because it is motivated by an extrinsic value.[29] Subsequently, even if their views seem to track "accurate" aesthetic judgements, we think their epistemic tools for arriving at that correct judgement are faulty and unreliable. Given the pervasiveness of artistic vices like snobbery, overcoming extrinsic concerns becomes a praiseworthy achievement. When this kind of attention to artworks becomes a repeated pattern of behaviour, then we can speak of artistic virtues of character.

For the virtue theorist, artistic virtue can be realised in both the creative and appreciative process. The virtue of creativity is routinely exercised by artists during the artistic process. Further, artists can realise originality, wit, and imagination amongst others through the creation of artworks. It seems apt to talk about the utilisation and cultivation of wit during the production of works like Monty Python's *Life of Brian* or in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams. The audience might subsequently develop their own wit by engaging with and appreciating these kinds of artworks and so the same virtue might be fostered during both the creative process and the appreciative process. Of course, some of the virtues seem more applicable to the case of art than others, and we might worry that focusing on virtues like originality, imagination, and wit seems to undercut the proposed unity of the virtues, which itself is crucial for establishing that artistic virtue can play a constitutive role in wellbeing. Nonetheless, even the virtues that have a more ethical timbre can be cultivated in the creation and appreciation of art. David Bowie was an artist who for many represented a kind of radical authenticity and honesty. His music functioned as a powerful expression of his unique identity and an exploration of sexuality and gender through a variety of persons. We find in Bowie's oeuvre a palpable sense of fidelity and authenticity which has historically challenged societal and artistic norms. Just as honesty, integrity, and authenticity were cultivated in Bowie's creative output, for many people appreciating his work had a similar effect. As Simon Critchley observes,

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26 Goldie, "Virtues of Art and Human Well-Being," 189.

27 Ibid., 189.

28 Kieran, "Creativity as a Virtue of Character," 129.

29 See Kieran 2012 for a fuller discussion of the vice of snobbery.

> There is a world of people for whom Bowie was the being who permitted a powerful emotional connection and freed them to become some other kind of self, something freer, more queer, more honest.[30]

In addition to the intersection between these more obviously ethical virtues and the artistic virtues, we find that dispositions of character associated with intellectual pursuits overlap with our engagement with art. Kieran subscribed to a neo-cognitivist viewpoint where art is considered artistically valuable for the kinds of insights it can offer. The way in which art can alter, deepen, or enhance our existent conceptions of ourselves and the world is thought to be not just a cognitive–affective merit, but a genuine artistic merit. Insight is thus the kind of virtue that we can develop from art just as readily as we do from our ethical and intellectual activities. Given that artistic virtues share the structure of intellectual/moral virtues, are achievements of character that transcend mere skills, and subsequently are of intrinsic worth, the virtue theorist goes on to argue that artistic virtues play a constitutive role in the good life or living well.[31] Utilising a broadly Neo-Aristotelian account, Kieran ties art's intrinsic value to well-being:

> A good or flourishing human life involves activity that exercises and cultivates human capacities and traits for the right sort of reasons in praiseworthy or admirable ways.[32]

Just as cultivating integrity or honesty in ethical or intellectual contexts is considered to be a constitutive element of a life well lived, developing the same virtue in artistic activity can contribute in the same manner to our flourishing.

6 Dressing and Living Well

When choosing our clothes, perhaps in choosing what to buy or what to wear in the morning, it might seem that even if aesthetic considerations are at play such as admiration for a certain print or colour of a piece, there is nothing as lofty as virtue factoring into considerations. To establish the potential artistic value and subsequently the intrinsic worth of "dressing-well," we need an account of how we might cultivate virtue through our relationship with our clothes. This section spells out the potential role that virtue might play in our sense of fashion and style, and thus offers a philosophical basis for Westwood's vision of fashion. In such a case, fashion can be a candidate for artistic value of the sort we tend to associate with our relationship to artforms like literature or visual art, and can subsequently be genuinely life-enhancing for the contribution these virtues make to living-well in a broadly Aristotelian sense. The first move will be to present a conception of fashion as a practice, using Alisdair MacIntyre's sense of the term, which MacIntyre takes to be the requisite contexts for virtuous activity.[33] I then draw on contemporary neo-Aristotelian virtue theories in aesthetics in order to flesh out the ways in which we can exercise and cultivate virtues through engaging in the practice of fashion well. From this it will emerge that dressing well can help us live well; it has the kind of artistic value that is genuinely life-enhancing. I end by briefly considering some worries with the position and suggest potential solutions.

MacIntyre introduces the notion of a practice as,

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.[34]

30 Critchley, *On Bowie*, 17.
31 Kieran, "Creativity, Virtue and the Challenges from Natural Talent, Ill-Being and Immorality," 5.
32 Ibid., 6.
33 MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 2007.
34 Ibid., 161.

He goes on to separate out internal goods from external goods, where the latter are the sorts of vices identified by Kieran including financial gain, social status, and fame and the former are goods internal to the practice. Goods internal to the practice are excellences that can only be achieved by performing the practice well and require skill, obedience, and experience. Crucially, these goods are achievements that enrich the community of practitioners. Some examples provided by MacIntyre include portrait painting and chess, but fashion suggests itself readily as another case. It is a cooperative human activity that involves designing, making, and styling pieces but it is also a practice that utilises standards of excellence which can be achieved when it is performed well. Fashion has its own culturally and temporally dynamic standards just as with any other artform, and we readily praise originality, elegance, or imagination whilst deriding the derivative and the dull. Community is equally vital to fashion, exemplified best in sub-cultures like the punk movement. Within these cultures, the contribution one makes through the excellences they realise in their ways of dressing strengthen community bonds and values whilst cultivating a sense of shared goals and values. Central to the notion of practice is tradition, given that contributing to an existent practice brings one into a standing with past practitioners who contributed through their excellence to the present form of the practice.[35] Incorporating tradition is central to Westwood's practice, epitomised in her frequent pairing of tartan and Harris Tweed – traditional woven fabrics with an extended cultural heritage – with modern silhouettes including mini-skirt suits and cropped blazers. The brand's logo, a Royal British orb encircled in the rings of Saturn, encapsulates the integration of the past into the future.

As a practice, fashion emerges as a space where people can realise intrinsically valuable artistic virtues of the sort discussed in Section 5. Perhaps most obviously, creativity, originality, imagination, wit, courage, and authenticity are virtues that we associate with fashion and these are merits we often praise in the work or style of practitioners. Members of the punk movement exercised many of these virtues in adopting the punk aesthetic, which so radically broke with conventional ways of dressing. For present purposes, it is important to bring out the artistic dimension of these virtues, to establish the artistic as well as ethical contributions fashion can make. A helpful catalyst for this is a recent study that interviewed long-standing buyers and employees of Westwood's brand. Jean S. Clarke and Robin Holt found that "they care about the material being used and invest themselves in wearing the clothes, riffing off them with their own self-made creations, finding kindred spirits similarly engaged."[36] In one particularly telling extract, a participant said they were attracted to Westwood's designs because "they are striking and unusual, and I hoped that the wearing of them – which in those days required a certain degree of courage – displayed similar qualities in me."[37] Here, the appreciation of the garments centres on both the originality and vision expressed in the pieces, but also in the way the clothes offer an opportunity for self-expression and courage. Frequently, consumers praised the originality and experimentation characteristic of Westwood's designs, in contrast to perceived materialism and lack of imagination on much of the contemporary market. Another recurrent theme was the opportunity Westwood's clothes presented for self-expression and a "DIY approach" to self-styling which allowed consumers to be creative and imaginative in how they wore the pieces. In the aforementioned cases, the garments are valued for their own sake and worn with the aim of developing and cultivating quintessential artistic virtues. Equally, consumers of Westwood's clothes make internally valuable contributions to the practice of fashion, for example in constructing the aesthetics and ideology constitutive of punk or subverting heteronormative conventions.

Vital to the concept of virtue sketched by Goldie and Kieran is the requirement for consistency in action, including cross-situational consistency and virtuous motivation. The punk movement brings out the potential for cross-situational virtue in fashion, given that the style was designed to be balked at not just for its "look" and the radically new way of dressing it required, but because of the radical political ideas it embodied; it forged an opportunity for individuals to express themselves artistically as much as it did politically. Further, in many cases, choosing to wear these iconoclastic and maverick garments was reflective of authenticity and a

35 Ibid., 166.

36 Clarke and Holt, "Vivienne Westwood and the Ethics of Consuming Fashion," 199.

37 Ibid., 207.

certain vision that is most likely tied to the individual's worldview and not just their fashion sense. In these sorts of cases, we would most likely expect the virtues at play to show up in a wider variety of situations that transcend the domains of the artistic and bleed into our ethical lives. We might also expect that someone keen to don gender non-conformist clothing would exercise open-mindedness in non-artistic contexts, perhaps in the way they think about gender, class, or culture. These should strike us as praiseworthy achievements, as feats of character.

The other central component of virtue, which elevates it from a mere skill to a praiseworthy excellence of character, is virtuous motivation. The appreciation must be motivated not by extrinsic considerations like money or clout, which MacIntyre labels as external goods, but on an appreciation of the object for its own sake. The virtuous punk values the garments for the merits of the piece such as the creativity or vision that it embodies, and in so doing is able to cultivate other virtues like authenticity or integrity through wearing the garment, itself a form of appreciation. We might initially worry that many of our stylistic choices are governed by what MacIntyre calls external goods and what Kieran calls extrinsic considerations. This would call into question the actual possibility of being intrinsically, aesthetically motivated when we choose and wear clothes. Perhaps the real reason a young punk saves up their money to buy the ripped knitted jumper held together with metal pins and emblazoned with an image of Queen Elizabeth I and the words "There is No Future" is to fit in with a crowd they perceive as cool or to give the impression they can afford designer clothing. This would fail to count as virtuous motivation, because their choices and actions were not guided by the intrinsic worth of the artistic virtues realisable through wearing the jumper.

MacIntyre offers us some resources for mitigating this worry. To determine whether activity was genuinely virtuous, "we need to know which intention or intentions were primary, that is to say, of which it is the case that, had the agent intended otherwise, he would not have performed that action."[38] In the case of the punk, if their intention was to realise the artistic virtue of self-expression in wearing the garment, then they would not have acted otherwise if it so happened that wearing the garment made them a social outcast. Conversely, if the primary motivation was clout, then the agent would spend their money elsewhere if they no longer believed that the Westwood jumper would win them the admiration of their peers. Successfully avoiding being swayed by external values and extrinsic goods like social status is precisely what make virtuous activity an achievement and an excellence of character. This underwrites the admiration we feel at the early adopters of Westwood's designs who were willing to transgress social norms out of sheer love for the clothes. Knowing which of the agent's intentions are causally effective, which seems prima facie possible, will allow us to discern whether or not they were virtuously motivated.

As a practice wherein we can cultivate and express artistic, intellectual, and ethical virtues, fashion can be genuinely life-enhancing and there are thus reasons to perform the practice well. Our appreciation of clothing and the creative virtues we can exercise in our ways of dressing can be constitutive of what it is to live well and can catalyse the flourishing of the individual. In addition to the benefits that virtuous activity within the practice of fashion can have on our own individual well-being, MacIntyre claims we can also make valuable contributions to the practice, as adopters of the punk movement did, which can serve as beneficial to the whole community of practitioners. There are thus individual-led and community-led reasons to "do fashion well," that is, to use the practice of fashion as an opportunity for virtuous activity.

7 Conclusion

This article has offered an account of fashion that suggest we can find genuinely life-enhancing value in our relationship to our clothes. Through dressing in a way that is expressive of artistic virtue, we can go some way to realising human flourishing and well-being in a manner that suggests that clothing can be artistically valuable. More generally, it is hoped that this discussion will provoke the philosopher of art to view fashion

38 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 176.

and clothing as a promising area of aesthetic discussion. There are clear aesthetic and ethical dimensions to fashion that should prompt us to take it seriously as a subject for aesthetic discourse.[39] There is substantial scope for further philosophical analysis of fashion. For example, it would be beneficial from the perspective of the virtue theorist to have more detailed accounts of how dressing might develop individual virtues like creativity of authenticity or the link between intellectual values,[40] like the cultivation of insight and our engagement with fashion, which has been explored extensively in conjunction with visual art by Kieran.[41] Whether or not fashion could involve intellectual values of this kind would have implications for how well fashion fits into the virtue theoretical framework as well as how we think about fashion more broadly. Finally, there is potential for developing alternative accounts of fashion which could compete with the virtue theoretic account. The virtue theoretic account of fashion would be more robust if it could be defended against different takes based on other types of theories of artistic value. All in all, fashion offers new and interesting possibilities for the philosophy of art and raises questions about how broadly we understand the category of "art" as well as how we think about our everyday aesthetic interactions.

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39 For example, Saito considers how concerns around sustainability should provoke us to reconsider our aesthetic tastes (2018).

40 An existent analysis of how Islamic conventions in dressing, particularly the different uses of the veil, can realise the virtue of modesty is offered by Bucar in "Islam and The Cultivation of Character," 217.

41 For example, see Chapter Three of Kieran, *Revealing Art*, 99–147.

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