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Reason in Action: Accountability, Rational Control, and the Voluntary in Aristotle

Wolt, Daniel Mark

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Reason in Action:
Accountability, Rational Control, and the Voluntary in Aristotle

Daniel M. Wolt

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Secondary Advisor: John Cooper

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ABSTRACT

For Aristotle, when an ordinary, adult human acts voluntarily, that agent is *accountable* for that action in the sense that she has the right standing to be praised if the action was good or blamed if the action was bad. The main question I am concerned with is this: what is it about the agent's having acted voluntarily that makes that agent accountable for the resulting action? I suggest that Aristotle's two treatments of the question, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, share with certain of Plato's later dialogues one core idea that is developed and worked out in interestingly different ways: all three sets of texts agree that the fact that an adult, human agent acts voluntarily implies that that action exhibits what I shall loosely term *rational control* over the action -- the action is caused by the agent by means of an exercise of the capacities that adult humans have *qua* practically rational beings. The texts also all agree that actions that are not caused by an exercise of the agent's rational capacities in the relevant way are not voluntary and hence the agent is not accountable for them. The texts disagree, however, both in how they understand the relevant notion of rational control and, accordingly, what actions get classed as voluntary or involuntary (or neither).

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For my parents, Barry and Helen.

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Introduction.

Aristotle's accounts of voluntary[1] action are meant to tell us something about when it is appropriate to praise or blame someone for something she has done. This fact raises a number of questions. One set of questions concerns the conceptual connection between Aristotle's project and the questions about moral responsibility or free will: although Aristotle does not use the language of moral responsibility, does he nonetheless employ this concept?[2] If so, what is his view about what makes someone morally responsible for an action? If not, where does his project differ from the project of delineating the conditions of moral responsibility? Similarly, Aristotle does not use the language of a free will, but does he nonetheless rely on indeterminist assumptions?[3] Does he, rather, operate in a determinist framework?[4] Is the question of determinism or indeterminism even relevant for understanding his account?[5]

Another, closely related set of questions concerns the *historical* connection between Aristotle's accounts and certain later philosophical developments: did Aristotle start the free will

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[1] In what follows "voluntary"/"involuntary" and "voluntarily"/"involuntarily" consistently translate *hekousion*/*akousion* and *hekôn*/*akôn* respectively. These are the traditional translations. Doubts have been raised by Kenny (1979, p. 28) and Charles (1984, pp. 61-2), among others, about the adequacy of these translations. I think that these worries have been shown to be ill-founded by Meyer (1993, pp. 9-14). Nonetheless, for my present purposes nothing much hangs on how precisely these terms are translated; the English terms may be viewed simply as placeholders for the Greek terms (cf. Charles (2012, p.1 n.1)).

[2] Susan Sauvé Meyer's 1993 monograph *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility* is devoted to arguing that he does. For the opposing view, see Chappell (1996) and Cooper (2013).

[3] For the view that Aristotle does assume some form of indeterminism, see Sorabji (1980, ch. 14), Broadie (1991, ch. 3), Natali (2004, chs. 8 and 9), and Destrée (2011).

[4] For the view that Aristotle assumes some form of determinism, see Furley (1977), Roberts (1989), Everson (1990), Meyer (1993), (2006), Bobzien (1998a, Chapter 6), (1998b), (2014), O'Keefe (2005, ch. 3), Frede (2007), and Donini (2009).

[5] For the view that it is not see, for example, Curren (1989) and Bobzien (2014). See also the next note.

debate?[6] If not what historical ties are there between Aristotle's project and the worries about determinism that became clearly enunciated in later ancient philosophy?

I mention these two sets of questions now primarily to situate my own project in relation to them by way of contrast. It is almost impossible for a large scale treatment of Aristotle's accounts of the voluntary to avoid the first set of questions entirely. Hence, over the course of this project I too will have occasion to comment on some of these issues.[7] The main question that I shall be concerned with, though, does not require the use of concepts like "moral responsibility" or "free will" to formulate or to answer, namely: how are Aristotle's accounts meant to achieve their goal of telling us about when an agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy for something she has done? What it is about the voluntary actions of ordinary adult agents in virtue of which, according to Aristotle, the good ones are praiseworthy and the bad ones are blameworthy?

With regard to the second set of questions, while a great deal of attention has been devoted to tracing the connections between Aristotle's accounts and the work of *later* philosophers, very little attention has been devoted to tracing the connections between Aristotle's accounts and the work of *earlier* philosophers. I think that this is because commentators tend to assume that there simply are not any direct predecessors to Aristotle's treatments. There is a

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[6] For a time it was common for commentators to read Aristotle's accounts as forming a part of the free will debate (hence Ross' (1923, p. 211) conclusion that Aristotle "shared the plain man's belief in free will but that he did not examine the problem very thoroughly"). The idea that Aristotle has views about free will, however, is already disputed by Grant (1866, vol. 1, p. 373; cf. Stewart (1892), vol. 1, pp. 225-226). Since then a very large literature on the when the free will debate started has emerged. Most commentators agree that it was later than Aristotle (see, for example, Huby (1967), Bobzien (1998b), and Frede (2011))

[7] In Chapter 2, for example, I shall briefly comment on the suitability of the language of moral responsibility to interpreting Aristotle's project and in Chapter 5, I shall briefly address the question whether Aristotle assumes some form of determinism or indeterminism.

trivial sense in which this is true: nowhere in Plato or in the extant works of any other philosopher before Aristotle do we find an attempt to delineate the conditions under which something is voluntary or involuntary. This does not mean, however, that there is no philosophically interesting background to Aristotle's accounts. The voluntary, or rather the *in*voluntary, comes up in Plato at quite a few places and Aristotle clearly alludes to these discussions a number of times in his own accounts. In Plato, however, the involuntary comes up in the context of defending the Socratic dictum often summarized as "no one errs willingly" (where "willingly" translates *akôn*, which I am translating "voluntarily"), and these discussions, it may be thought, bear little connection to Aristotle's own project when he deals with the voluntary. I think, however, that the connections between Aristotle's accounts of the voluntary and discussions of the involuntary in Plato have been underappreciated. In particular, I think that in certain of Plato's later dialogues, specifically the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, one finds evidence for a highly developed and sophisticated conception of the voluntary and involuntary that bears important and surprising similarities with Aristotle's own accounts. As such, these Platonic texts constitute an important bit of context from which to approach Aristotle's work.[8] In Chapter 1 I focus on the *Timaeus*, and reserve a treatment of the *Laws* for elsewhere.[9]

On the picture that I argue is found in the *Timaeus*, something's being voluntary requires that it be caused by the agent's intellect (*nous*) in a certain way. For the *Timaeus*, then, there is a

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[8] Several commentators have noticed the relevance of the *Laws* discussion to Aristotle's project, for example, Irwin (1980, pp. 143-144) and Ott (2006). I am not aware of any commentator on the *Timaeus* account who has called attention to the similarities between the conception of voluntary action there and Aristotle's conception.

[9] I initially planned to include in this dissertation a chapter on the *Laws*, but I excised that chapter so as not to exceed far the Philosophy Department's recommendation that dissertations not exceed 50,000 words (See http://philosophy.princeton.edu/graduate/generals-and-dissertations, last accessed May 18, 2016).

connection drawn between the voluntary and the things that we cause *qua* rational. In the remaining chapters I show that the same idea is at the heart of Aristotle's treatments of the voluntary.

As I discuss in Chapter 2, Aristotle's accounts are meant to tell us something about when an agent bears the right sort of connection to an action to be praised for it, if it is good, or blamed for it, if it is bad. When an action satisfies these conditions, I shall say that the agent is accountable for the action. The question for the remaining chapters is what the connection between voluntariness and accountability is meant to be. In both the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) and the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), I argue, the answer to this question involves the idea that one's voluntary actions reflect an exercise of rational control.

The two treatises flesh out the relevant notion in different ways, however. I begin in Chapter 3 with the *Eudemian* account. This account differs from the more widely read and discussed *Nicomachean* account in a number of important ways which, in my view, have not been sufficiently appreciated by commentators. Foremost among these is the way in which the *EE* defines the voluntary: as what is done on the basis of thought (*kata dianoian*, II 9, 1225b1). I argue for an interpretation of this definition according to which an action is done on the basis of thought in the relevant sense if and only if that action is the direct result of an exercise of the agent's capacity to take things as reasons for acting. This interpretation explains the link between voluntariness and accountability: the reason that fully developed human agents are accountable for their voluntary actions is that those actions reflect exercises of the agent's own capacity for practical reason.

In the remaining chapters I focus on the *Nicomachean* account. The *NE* presents a number of distinct challenges. One is that *NE* III 1 recognizes a class of actions that are neither voluntary nor involuntary, non-voluntary (*ouch hekousion*) actions. Aristotle seems willing to accept that non-voluntary actions are sometimes blameworthy. This suggests that voluntariness is less closely connected to accountability than one might think: voluntariness is not a necessary condition for accountability. In Chapter 4, I investigate this issue and argue that, in fact, there are two distinct conceptions of voluntariness at work in the *NE*. On the narrow conception formulated in III 1 an action need not be voluntary for the agent to be accountable for it. There is also a broader conception, however, according to which something's being voluntary is simply a matter of its being under the agent's control in some way. An action's being voluntary in this sense *is* a necessary and sufficient condition for accountability.

These findings set the stage for the the investigation into the *explanatory* relation between voluntariness and accountability in the *NE* -- that is, what is it about the fact that a fully-developed human agent has acted voluntarily that implies that she is accountable for that action? I take up this question in Chapter 5. On the picture I argue for, the connection between voluntariness and accountability is more complex than in the *EE* (attractively so, in my opinion). The reason that fully-developed human agents are characteristically accountable for their voluntary actions is that these actions are under the agent's control. But, I argue, Aristotle understands control in such a way that for an action to be under the agent's control is for that action to be caused, in a certain way, by the agent's capacity for practical reason. The focal case of an action that the agent controls and is accountable for is action done on the basis of decision (*prohairesis*) -- i.e., actions done as a result of deliberating. Actions that are not done on the basis

of deliberation, however, are characteristically under the control of the agent too, but in a mediated way. One controls these actions by virtue of the fact that one's deliberate actions control what states of character one acquires, and one's states of character determine one's non-deliberative actions.

It results that the three texts that I treat present conceptions of the voluntary that, although they share the same core idea that voluntariness and accountability involves rational control, flesh this idea out at increasing levels of complexity. This suggests that the account of voluntary action in the *Nicomachean Ethic*s, which is often regarded as a fresh start in the history of philosophy, actually has a considerable amount of history of its own.

1.

Plato's *Timaeus* on the (In)voluntary

1. Introduction

Nicomachean Ethics III 1 and *Eudemian Ethics* II 6-9 are the earliest extant philosophical treatments of the voluntary. Aristotle was not, however, the only one of Plato's students to take an interest in this topic. Xenocrates is reported to have written a book titled "On the voluntary,"[1] and the Academic philosophical lexicon *Definitions* — a work sometimes attributed to Speusippus[2] (Plato's successor as head of the Academy) — includes a definition of the voluntary that is strikingly similar to the one Aristotle himself endorses in the *Eudemian Ethics*.[3] Where did this early Academic interest in the voluntary come from? One possibility is that it was inspired

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[1] Fragment 2, line 78.

[2] The *Definitions* is attributed to Speusippus by the Neoplatonist commentator Olympiodorus (*Proleg*. 26) and one of the manuscripts of the *Definitions* attributes it to Speusippus as well (see Souilhé (1930, p. 156) who cites Adam (1925)). It is not clear, however, whether this attribution is correct or, for that matter if the collection constitutes the work of one person at all. It does appear, in any case, that Aristotle was aware of at least some of the contents of the work, as evidenced by the *Topics*, an early work devoted to Academic dialectic, where Aristotle alludes at a number of places to definitions that occur in the *Definitions* (see Souilhé (*ibid*., p. 156, n. 4) for a list of references in the *Topics* with the corresponding passages in the *Definitions*).

[3] In the *Eudemian Ethics* the voluntary is defined as what is "on the basis of thought" (*kata dianoian*, II 9, 1225b1), while the involuntary is what is "contrary to (*para*)" thought (II 7, 1223a26). The *Definitions'* entry for "involuntary" is: "what is completed contrary to thought (*para dianoian*)" (416a10) while the definition of the voluntary is "what is itself persuasive (*prosagôgon*); what is chosen for itself; what is achieved on the basis of thought (*kata dianoian*)" (415a1-2).

by Aristotle's own work on the topic. Another possibility is that both Aristotle and his Academic contemporaries were contributing to a preexisting discussion. Certain of Plato's later dialogues, specifically the *Laws* and the *Timaeus*, lend credibility to the latter hypothesis. Here I shall focus on the latter and argue that there we find a conception of the voluntary and its relationship to blameworthiness that is closely connected to Aristotle's views on the topic. Hence, I suggest that the conception of the voluntary at work in the *Timaeus* is perhaps the closest philosophical predecessor to the conceptions that Aristotle later developed.[4]

This claim may seem surprising for two reasons. The first is that the voluntary, or rather the *in*voluntary, only comes up in the the *Timaeus* in the course of defending a view that Aristotle in his own treatments of the topic clearly opposes. This view — call it *the Asymmetry Thesis*[5] or *AT* — holds that virtue is importantly different than vice with respect to voluntariness: while virtue is voluntary, vice is involuntary.[6] Second, it may be thought that the point of disagreement between Aristotle and the proponents of AT in Plato's dialogues is fairly straightforward. The *Timaeus* is, of course, not the only Platonic dialogue to defend AT. The view is defended all

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[4] Notice that I do not attribute any view to Plato himself. It is always difficult to attribute views to Plato on the basis of things said by characters in his dialogues, and especially in a very atypical dialogue like the *Timaeus*. Taylor (1928), for example, argues that "the teaching of Timaeus can be shown to be in detail exactly what we should expect in a fifth century Italian Pythagorean who was also a medical man" (p. 11) and that hence Plato's point is not to present his own views or even views that he thought very attractive but rather to provide an exposition or parody of Pythagorean natural philosophy. This view has not received much support from subsequent commentators (for good reason, I think; as I alluded to earlier, I think the *Laws* contains substantially the same conception of voluntariness as the *Timaeus* does and defend this claim elsewhere), but the relationship between the views in the *Timaeus* and Plato's own thinking does not particularly matter for the present purposes. The point of treating the *Timaeus* is because it formed a part of Aristotle's intellectual milieu and hence it is reasonable to include it for consideration when one is looking into thinking about voluntariness that may have informed Aristotle's own approach.

[5] Following the terminology coined by Meyer (1993).

[6] An alternative formulation of the thesis holds that while virtuous actions are voluntary, vicious actions are not. This latter formulation is defended, for example, in *Laws* IX. Although Timaeus does not explicitly defend the view that vicious actions are involuntary, I do think he implicitly accepts this (see n. 30 on p. 28 below).

throughout the Platonic corpus, most notoriously in "Socratic" dialogues like the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*. This brings me to the second main reason the thesis of this chapter may seem surprising. It may be thought that the point of disagreement between Aristotle and the Platonic defenses of AT is a relatively simple matter. Many of the defenses of AT in Plato seem to rely on the assumption that (i) for an action to be voluntary it must be done on the basis of wish (*boulêsis*) and that (ii) the object of wish is the real, and not the apparent good.

The *Timaeus*, however, does not appeal to either of these assumptions in its defense of AT and hence, though Timaeus argues for a view that Aristotle rejects, the source of disagreement is more difficult to diagnose. And once one looks into the basis on which Timaeus does argue for AT, I suggest, one finds that that the conception of voluntariness at work has a great deal more in common with Aristotle's views than one may expect. I argue that Timaeus understands voluntariness in terms of what I shall call *rational control*: for something to qualify as voluntary and for the agent to be blameworthy for it, it must be caused in a certain way by an exercise of the agent's rational capacities. The reason, according to Timaeus, that vice and vicious actions are involuntary is that they are caused not by the exercise of the agent's intellect (*nous*), but rather by the agent's intellect being *prevented* from doing its work by something external. In the chapters that follow, I argue that Aristotle too understands voluntariness in terms of rational control, though the precise ways in which he fleshes the relevant concept out differ dramatically.

I proceed as follows. I begin in section 2 by briefly considering the basis that Timaeus gives for thinking that vice is involuntary. On one plausible and common way of understanding the argument, Timaeus is appealing to deterministic considerations — considerations to the effect that vice comes about as a result of causes beyond our control. A major challenge for this

reading, however, is that it appears unable to explain why only *vice*, and not *also* virtue, is involuntary, since, plausibly, virtuous states of character, on Timaeus' picture, come about as a result of factors beyond the subject's control as well. To avoid this problem I argue for a non-deterministic interpretation of Timaeus' argument. I begin, in section 3, by examining Timaeus' conception of the involuntary and arguing that for Timaeus a state or motion is involuntary is for it to be contrary to the nature of the subject of that state or motion. I then argue, in section 4, that the *Timaeus* employs a conception of the human soul according to which the soul's natural condition is identical to its good condition. These two conclusions suggest that the fact that vice is involuntary is not completely explained by reference to its causal history. Rather, vice is involuntary in virtue of the relationship between vice and the natural condition of the soul. I conclude, in section 5, by considering the connection between voluntariness and blameworthiness. I suggest that the at the reason that one is not blameworthy for one's involuntary states or actions is that those conditions or actions are not explained by the subject himself. What results is a view of considerably greater philosophical sophistication and interest than one might expect.

2. Vice as disease of the soul

First, a brief overview of Timaeus' discussion of disease of the soul. In the immediately preceding part of his oration, Timaeus had discussed bodily disease and he introduces the topic of disease of the soul by saying that diseases of the soul are caused by a bad bodily condition (86B1-2).[7] He goes on to distinguish between two "kinds" (*genê*) of diseases the soul: one is

[7] This construal of the text is disputed. I return to this topic and defend this reading below in section 4.

what he calls *mania*, madness; the other is what he calls *amathia*, lack-of-learning (86B3-4). While he calls these "kinds," what he goes on to say makes clear that they are better thought of as two *aspects* of disease of the soul rather than two *species*.[8] One of the examples he gives of someone suffering from a disease of the soul, for example, is someone who suffers from excessive sexual desires because of an excess of marrow in his body. Timaeus describes the condition of this person in terms that make clear that this is meant to be an example of someone who is suffering from a form of *mania*. He says, for example, that the person is "raving mad" (*luta(i)*, 86C2), and that the pleasures and pains that he experiences as a result of his condition make him "crazy" (*emmanês*, 86C7).

Timaeus does not provide a parallel description of a case of someone suffering from *amathia*, but I think this is because both *mania* and *amathia* are aspects of disease of the soul that manifest themselves in the same conditions. Hence, although Timaeus' description of someone suffering from hypersexuality strongly suggests that this is a condition of *mania*, he also says that this condition causes him to be "least of all capable of rational thought" (86C2) and "foolish" (*aphrona*, 86D1). This cognitive component of the agent's condition suggests that *amathia* is involved in his condition as well, and this seems to be confirmed when, toward the end of his discussion of this case, he concludes: "indeed in the case of lack-of-self-control with respect to pleasures (*hêdonôn akrateia*) quite generally, it is not right to reproach people for it, for no one is voluntarily evil, but becomes so as a result of one or another corrupt condition of his body and an uneducated upbringing (*apaideuton trophên*)" (865D-E2).[9] The reference to an

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[8] For a more detailed defense and discussion of the view that mania and amathia are not meant to be two distinct species of disease of the soul, see Lautner (2011).

[9] All translations from the *Timaeus* are from Saunders in Cooper (1997) with minor modifications unless otherwise noted.

uneducated upbringing implies that at least in some cases similar to the one described, the cause of the agent's condition is at least partly social.

The picture that results is that vice is ultimately explicable in terms of an interaction between two kinds of factors: facts about the condition of the agent's body and facts about the conditions of the agent's upbringing. Perhaps someone with a bad physical condition but with good educators looking after him would be able to overcome that condition. Or, conversely, perhaps someone with an exceptionally good physical condition wouldn't fall prey to vices that his social circumstances tend to promote. But, the idea seems to be, in any case in which an agent *does* suffer from a vice, that vice can be completely explained by reference to facts about his physical constitution and upbringing.

We have, then, a causal account of how vice comes about. What is the connection between this account and the conclusion that vice is involuntary? To answer this question, let us consider the passage within which Timaeus sums up his discussion of disease of the soul:

1. When men whose constitutions are bad have bad forms of government where bad civic speeches are given, both in public and in private and where, besides, no studies that could remedy the situation are at all pursued by people from their youth on up, that is how all of us who are bad come to be in that way — the products of two causes both entirely beyond our control. It is the begetters far more than the begotten, and the nurturers far more than the nurtured, that one must allege as the cause (*aitiateon*) of all this. (87A7-B6)

The general line of thought here seems quite familiar. It is quite common, for example, in American public discourse today to find arguments for reforming penal practices on the basis of the idea that when people from disadvantaged backgrounds commit crimes — drug dealing or gang-activity, perhaps — these are simply the result of factors beyond their control — lack of access to education, poverty, institutionalised racism, etc. — and hence we should adopt a less

retributive and a more rehabilitative approach to treating these problems. The similarity between this latter line of thought and the apparent argument in Passage 1 is, I think, real, but there must be more to the story. After all, while the general line of thought in Passage 1 may seem familiar enough, it is meant to support a conclusion that is in fact quite unfamiliar, namely that vice is *unlike* virtue in that it is involuntary. But it is hard to see how the considerations cited there could support this asymmetry. If vice comes from bad physical and social factors, then, it would seem, virtue comes from *good* physical and social factors. And good physical and social factors are just as much beyond our control as bad ones are. One can no more choose to be born into good social conditions than she can choose to be born into bad ones. A major challenge for understanding the argument for AT in the *Timaeus*, then, is to understand why Timaeus would not think that this parallel argument for thinking that virtue is involuntary is sound.

Another problem arises from considering the idea that bad social and physical factors are beyond our control. It certainly is true that *some* social and physical factors are beyond our control — for instance, the social conditions one is born into or certain congenital physiological conditions — but it does not seem true that *quite generally* social and physical factors are beyond one's control. Aristotle, for example, makes the point that even a bodily diseases may be voluntary, if, for example, the agent acquires it by disregarding his doctor's orders (*NE* III 5, 1114a21-31). Moreover, the *Timaeus* itself places a great deal of emphasis on measures that one can take to mold one's character. In fact, immediately after Passage 1 Timaeus adds that "even so, one should make every possible effort to flee from badness, whether with the help of one's upbringing or the pursuits or studies one undertakes, and to seize the opposite" (87B6-8). He goes on to discuss at some length therapeutic measures aimed at achieving a good soul-body

balance. Because of the emphasis that Timaeus places on the ways in which our own efforts can affect our psychic and physical health, Richard Stalley (1996) has suggested that by linking vice with disease, Timaeus does not mean to *limit* the sphere of human responsibility but rather to *enlarge* it: vice is a disease, but like other diseases, it is something for which we are responsible (p. 359). This is hard to reconcile, however, with Timaeus' explicit assertions that vice is neither voluntary nor blameworthy. Hence, A.E. Taylor (1928) concludes, somewhat uncharitably, that Timaeus' "determinist moral psychology" is "rather glaringly inconsistent with itself" (p. 614).

I think that these two problems have the same source, namely the assumption that Timaeus' argument for AT appeals to deterministic considerations. The first worry suggests that the same deterministic considerations ought to imply that virtue is voluntary. The second worry suggests that Timaeus does not consistently adhere to those deterministic assumptions. I shall suggest, though, that it is a mistake to understand Timaeus' argument in this way, and hence neither of these worries is well founded. Let me begin by considering the textual evidence for the deterministic reading.

If one looks only at Saunders' translation that I have quoted above, it would seem that the textual evidence is quite good. Of particular importance here is the sentence that Saunders translates "that is how all of us who are bad come to be in that way — the products of two causes both entirely beyond our control." As it stands this looks very much like an appeal to deterministic considerations. However, Saunders' translation is in this respect highly misleading. "Entirely beyond our control" translates *akousiôtata*, literally, "most involuntary." The reason Saunders translates this word as he does, presumably, is that he assumes that what makes these

factors "most involuntary" is that they are beyond our control. But to assume this is to beg the question whether Timaeus is appealing to some form of determinism in this passage.[10]

Moreover, as Meyer (2014, p. 66) rightly points out, when Timaeus says that one becomes vicious on account of two *akousiôtata* causes, he is reiterating a point he made earlier when he said that bad bodily conditions and bad upbringings are "inimical (*echthra*) afflictions that come to any man involuntarily" (86E3).[11] The fact that these conditions are involuntary here seems to be explained not by reference to the fact that they are beyond the agent's control, but rather that they are "inimical" to the agent.[12] This is important because it suggests the possibility of a non-deterministic reading of Timaeus' argument. Suppose, for example, that Timaeus understands the involuntary as what is contrary to the agent's wish (*boulêsis*), as Socrates does in various of Plato's other dialogues.[13] In that case, it would be unnecessary to appeal to deterministic considerations to justify the claim that vice comes about as a result of *akousiôtata* causes. One would need only to consider the relationship between the causes of vice and the agent's wishes. Now, there is no evidence that Timaeus actually does think of the involuntary in terms of wish,[14] but my aim in the remainder of this chapter is to offer an analogous, non-deterministic interpretation. I begin by looking into Timaeus' conception of the involuntary. I

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[10] Saunders is not alone in translating the passage in this way. Jowett (1871), Archer-Hinde (1888), and Zeyl (2000) translate almost identically "two causes entirely beyond our own control." Cf. Rivaud's (1925) "deux causes tout à fait indépendentes de notre volonté" and Lopes' (2011) "duas coisas completamente alheias à sua vontade." More faithful translations are Cornford's (1935) "two causes that are altogether against the will" and Fraccaroli's (1906) "due cagioni affato involontarie."

[11] Saunders' very loose translation obscures the similarity: "No one who incurs these pernicious conditions would will to have them."

[12] Hence, Meyer (*ibid*.): "Timaeus, in calling these causes ἀκουσιώτατα… is not saying that such bodily condition and education are 'entirely beyond our control,' but rather that these conditions are deeply contrary to our interests. It is not causality but contrariety that he evokes with that term."

[13] See, for example, *Gorgias* 469D-470A and *Cratylus* 420D.

[14] The term βούλησις, for example, only occurs once in the *Timaeus* (at 41b4) and in a context that has nothing to do with the voluntary or involuntary.

then show, how this conception of involuntariness in conjunction with certain of Timaeus' views about the nature of the soul, underwrites the conclusion that vice is involuntary.

3. The involuntary as the counter-natural

On the picture that I shall argue for, something's being involuntary is a matter of its being contrary to the nature of the subject in question. On this conception, a subject that undergoes a certain motion, for example, would do so involuntarily if and only if that motion is contrary to the natural tendency of the subject at issue. In favor of this picture, I want to begin by calling attention to a use of the the language of involuntariness in the *Timaeus* that is only plausibly understood along these lines. I then provide reasons for thinking that this is also the best way of understanding Timaeus' language in the discussion of disease of the soul.

The passage I am referring to occurs in Timaeus' discussion of the movement of the natural bodies.

> 2. Heavy and light can be most clearly explained if we examine them in conjunction with what we call above and below. It is entirely wrong to hold that there are by nature two separate regions, divorced from and entirely opposite one another, the one region "below" toward which anything that has physical mass tends to move and the other region "above" toward which everything [that has physical mass] makes it way involuntarily (*akousiôs*). (62C3-8)

What Timaeus is disputing in this passage is not that things with mass move upwards involuntarily, but rather that there is an absolute region that constitutes "above" or "below" (he goes on to argue that, rather, "above" and "below" are relative terms). The question that is relevant for us is why Timaeus characterizes the movement of a natural body with mass when it is moved upwards as involuntary. The answer can be surmised from what he goes on to say.

Speaking again of someone lifting an object with mass upwards, he says: "When we stand on the earth and weigh out one earth-like thing against another and sometimes some earth itself we drag these thing by force and contrary to their natural tendency (*bia(i) kai para phusin*), into the alien air" (63D6-8).[15] What this suggests is that in the earlier remarks in Passage 2, Timaeus was using "involuntarily" equivalently to the way he uses "by force" (*bia(i)*) here. Moreover, he analyzes the notion of force in terms of the relationship between a movement and the subject's natural tendency. This suggests, further, that something's being involuntary is a matter of its being contrary to the natural tendency of the agent.

Now, the idea that the forced is identical to the involuntary may seem odd at first glance, at least if we are already acquainted with Aristotle's discussion of the involuntary in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is worth noting, though, that at least in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle takes the idea that the forced and the involuntary are the same quite seriously.[16] Moreover, in the *EE* Aristotle also seems to understand the notion of force in at least roughly the same way that Timaeus does, in terms of the relationship between a movement and the natural tendency of the subject. Consider, for example, the following remarks from *EE* II 8:

3. Well then, it is thought that, in connection with actions that are done, the compelled and the necessitated, and compulsion and necessitation, stand as opposites to the voluntary and to persuasion. But, considering the use of these terms overall, we speak of the compelled and necessitation also in the case of lifeless things. In fact, we say that a stone is [sometimes] transported upwards and fire downwards by compulsion and by being subject to necessitation; but, when they are transported [upwards or downwards] by [their own] nature and by the impulse that they have just by being themselves, that is not by compulsion—but nor are they said to be voluntary [in being so transported]: the opposed

[15] Cf. the use of βιαζόμενος at 63B5.
[16] See II 7, 1223a29-30, 1223b20-21, II 8, 1224a9-11.

> states have no name. We say [only] that it is by compulsion whenever the thing is transported contrary to this [natural impulse].[17] (1224a13-20)

The view that Aristotle is describing here very clearly mirrors the view that I suggest is present in the *Timaeus*, and in fact, I think it is very likely that Aristotle has works like the *Timaeus* in mind in writing this. Aristotle himself, as we see here, thinks that it is absurd to simply identify the forced with the involuntary because he thinks it is absurd to apply the term "involuntary" to the movements of lifeless things. Passage 2, however, strongly suggests that Timaeus has no such compunctions.[18]

This gives us very good reason for believing that, in the *Timaeus*, something's being involuntary is a matter of that thing being contrary to the natural motions of the subject. It is not obvious, however, how this relates to the argument that vice is involuntary. I think, though, that once we consider the theory of soul at work in the *Timaeus*, the connection between these two issues becomes clear. I turn there now.

4. Soul

According to the *Timaeus*' theory of soul, the soul achieves its characteristic activities by being itself subject to certain kinds of motion. I shall argue, moreover, that there are certain kinds of motions that are *natural* to the soul. Vice arises from a disruption of these motions. Hence, just as the movement of a rock that someone lifts upwards is forced and moves involuntarily because

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[17] Translation from Cooper (unpublished).

[18] The use of ἀκουσιῶς at 62C7 is the only instance that I have been able to locate of the language of voluntariness and involuntariness being applied to an inanimate object. This is not, however, a reason to discount the reading I have suggested. On the contrary, I think that Plato's somewhat odd use of the term gives us insight into how the voluntary is being conceived: the reason that it makes sense for him to use the term there is precisely that he is thinking of the involuntary in terms of force and here he means to call attention to the way in which the movement of the earth is forced.

the movement is contrary to its natural tendencies, vice is involuntary because it is a condition in which the soul is impeded from following its own natural tendencies.

Now, the key portion of text that is relevant for this topic is 41A-44C, where Timaeus describes how the divine creator of the universe, the Demiurge, tasked certain lesser gods with creating the human soul only after he had already created the World Soul. The human soul, moreover, is meant to resemble the World Soul in certain respects. In fact, the human soul is formed out of the leftovers of the mixture from which the World Soul was formed and it is constructed in "somewhat the same way" (41D4-7). Hence, to begin, it will be worthwhile briefly to consider Timaeus' account of the World Soul.

At the very beginning of Timaeus' oration, we are told that when the Demiurge created the cosmos, he wanted it to be as good as possible. This fact is used to explain why he created the World Soul. Since "in the realm of things naturally visible, no unintelligent thing (*anoêton*) could as a whole be better than anything which does possess intelligence (*noun echontos*) as a whole," (30B1-3) the Demiurge concluded that the cosmos needed to be endowed with Intelligence (*nous*). And since "it is impossible for anything to come to possess intelligence (*nous*) apart from soul" (30B3), the god created the World Soul in which to implant *nous* in the cosmos. The term *nous* here, and quite generally in Plato, is used to refer to a certain kind of virtue, associated with rationality and orderliness.[19]

The way in which the Demiurge ensured that the World Soul would have this virtue is by constructing it in such a way as to be subject to certain motions, specifically circular motions.

[19] For a detailed defense of this view, see Menn (1995).

The process by which he creates the World Soul is, in short, as follows.[20] He begins by mixing together, in certain proportions, three ingredients: the Same, the Different, and Being. The resulting mixture is then divided into intervals and cut into two bands, which are bent into circles — the circle of the Same and the circle of the Different. The latter is subdivided into seven smaller circles which revolve, at certain proportions and certain speeds, within the circle of the Same. Timaeus makes clear that it is in these circular movements that *nous* manifests itself: "And revolving within itself, [the World Soul] initiated a divine beginning of unceasing, intelligent life for all time" (36E3-5). The participial phrase "revolving within itself" is causal here: it explains how it is that the World Soul gave rise to intelligent life. This reading is confirmed by what Timaeus goes on to say a little further on, when he explains in somewhat more detail the motions of the parts of the World Soul and how they relate to the activities that it is responsible for:

> 4. Because the soul is a mixture of the Same, the Different and Being [...] and because it circles round upon itself, then, whenever it comes into contact with something whose being is scatterable or else with something whose being is indivisible, it is stirred throughout its whole self. It then declares what exactly that thing is the same as, or what it is different from, and in what respect and in what manner, as well as when, it turns out that they are the same or different and are characterized as such. (37A2-B1)

This passage suggests that the reason Timaeus posits the Same, the Different, and Being as the ingredients of the World Soul is to account for cognitive capacities, namely the capacity to form certain kinds of judgements.[21] And the way, specifically, in which these components of the World Soul give rise to these activities is by undergoing certain motions, some examples of which are

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[20] I follow here the interpretation taken by Grube (1932), Cornford (1935), Robinson (1970), and Johansen (2008).

[21] This is not to say that it this account is *only* meant to explain cognitive activities. It is also meant to explain the soul's locomotive function as well, as Johansen points out (2008, p. 139): later on at 57Dff. Timaeus seems to explain locomotion and rest in terms of Sameness and Difference respectively.

given here. This is made explicit when Timaeus goes on to say that it is because the World Soul engages in these kinds of motions that intelligence (*nous*) and knowledge (*epistêmê*) come to be in the soul (37C2-3). This confirms that the World Soul manifests *nous* by virtue of undergoing certain circular motions.[22]

The relevance for all of this to our present purposes is that it suggests that since the human soul is constructed of the same stuff as the World Soul and the World Soul is constructed in such a way as to naturally exhibit *nous*, we ought to expect that the human soul, in its natural condition would exhibit *nous* as well. Indeed, later on, when describing how the lesser gods implanted the human soul in the human body, Timaeus clearly endorses this very conclusion.

> 5. Whenever a soul is bound within a mortal body, it is at first without intelligence (*anous*). But as the stream that brings growth and nourishment diminishes and the soul's orbit regain their composure, resume their proper courses and establish themselves more and more with the passage of time, their revolutions are set straight to conform to the configuration of each of the circles takes in its natural course. They then correctly identify what is the same and what is different and render wise (*emphrona*) the person who possesses them. (44A7-B7)

In the first sentence Timaeus is alluding to the condition of an infant. That infants lack the intellectual capacities that adults have is explained by reference to differences between adult and infant bodies. An infant's body is small and grows rapidly which requires a rapid influx of nutrition. This influx of nutrition issues in rectilinear motions which disturb the circular motions of the soul. Sense-perception has the same effect: presumably because of the smallness of their

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[22] Some commentators have thought it incoherent to think that the soul, being immaterial, is literally in motion and hence have interpreted Timaeus' explicit and repeated assertions to the contrary figuratively (for example, Cherniss (1944), Ross (1961), and Lee (1976)). There is very good evidence against this figurative reading though, (on which see Sedley (2000, pp. 317-319) and Burnyeat (2000, pp. 58-60)), and, as Johansen (2008, pp. 140-142) argues, it seem to be based in the assumption that the only way to explain the incorporeality of soul is along Cartesian lines, which is false.

bodies, infants experience sense-perception in a very different way than adults do. Its effects are much more violent and contribute to the disturbances of the soul's natural movement. As a result of these factors, we are told, the infant moves "in a disorderly, random and irrational way" (43B1-2).

The process of allowing the motions of one's soul to "regain their composure" is, however, not simply a matter of growing up and thereby acquiring the cognitive abilities of an ordinary human being. This is made clear by what Timaeus goes on to say in the lines immediately after Passage 5.

6. And to be sure, if such a person also gets proper nurture to supplement his education, he'll turn out perfectly whole and healthy, and will have escaped the most grievous of illnesses. But if he neglects this he'll limp his way through life and return to Hades incomplete (*atelês*) and unintelligent (*anoêtos*). (44B8-C4)

Like Passage 1, here we find the idea that to avoid vice, good social and physical conditions are necessary. We also see the idea that the condition that someone suffers from as a result of those conditions not being met is a disease. The disease in question consists in being *anoêtos*, i.e. lacking intelligence (*nous*). Given the account of the soul and the way in which *nous* manifests itself (or fails to do so) in it, we are in a position to make good sense of this idea. The soul does not exhibit *nous* because it does not undergo the relevant circular motions, and the reason it does not undergo these motions is that it is disturbed by the rectilinear motions that come about as a result of being implanted in the body.

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What remains is to return to the discussion of disease of the soul itself to see how this picture allows us to understand more fully what Timaeus says there. I begin by considering the lines with which Timaeus introduces the discussion of disease of the soul.

7. [i] While the diseases that concern the body come about in this way, the diseases that concern the soul come about on account of a bodily state in the following way.
[ii] For it is necessary to identify disease of the soul with lack of intelligence (*anoia*), and of lack of intelligence there are two kinds. One is madness (*mania*), the other is lack-of-learning (*amathia*).[23] (86 B1-4)

Both parts of this passage contain important questions of construal. First, part (i) is ambiguous between two construals, each of which has its defenders. I take *dia sômatos hexin* ("on account of a bodily state"), in the most natural way, with *sumbainei gignomena* ("come about"), resupplied from the preceding clause. On this construal Timaeus is saying that all diseases of the soul come about on account of a bad bodily condition.[24] An alternative, less natural construal, however, allows a weaker reading. If we take *dia sômatos hexin* with *ta de peri psuchên* ("the [diseases] that concern the soul"), then Timaeus is only introducing a discussion of a certain implied subclass of diseases of the soul, namely those that result from a bodily condition, implying that there are others that do not result from a bodily condition.[25]

Part (ii) is subject to a similar ambiguity. Timaeus could be saying either that disease of the soul is identified with lack-of-intelligence (*anoia*), which has two kinds or he could be saying that *the* disease of the soul that is called lack-of-intelligence has two kinds. The latter alternative

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[23] Καὶ τὰ μὲν περὶ τὸ σῶμα νοσήματα ταύτῃ συμβαίνει γιγνόμενα, τὰ δὲ περὶ ψυχὴν διὰ σώματος ἕξιν τῇδε. Νόσον μὲν δὴ ψυχῆς ἄνοιαν συγχωρητέον, δύο δ' ἀνοίας γένη, τὸ μὲν μανίαν, τὸ δὲ ἀμαθίαν.
[24] This is the reading of the defended by Archer-Hind (1888), Gill (2000), and Mackenzie (1985) among others.
[25] This is the reading taken by Cornford (1935) and Saunders (1991) among others.

would leave open the possibility that there is some disease of the soul other than lack-of-intelligence.

I think, however, that in light of what we have seen, we can answer both these questions with some confidence. First, it makes good sense for Timaeus to identify disease of the soul in general with *anoia* (in fact, he already came very close to doing this in Passage 6 above). Only when a soul is in its good condition does it manifest *nous*, hence when a soul is in a bad condition, it is in a condition in which it lacks *nous* or, equivalently, exhibits *anoia*. Moreover, it is equally clear that we ought to understand part (i) to be making the claim that the body is the origin of disease of the soul in general. The soul is by nature such as to exhibit at least roughly the same qualities as the World Soul. The reason that it does not *always* exhibit these qualities when it is embodied, as we saw from Passage 5, is because of the influence of the body. I take it, then, that Timaeus' remarks in Passage 7 provide considerable support for the picture that I have argued for.

This picture finds further support from remarks about the soul that Timaeus makes at the beginning of this description of human physiology. The soul that the Demiurge created, and which is therefore immortal, is only one kind of soul present in the human being. In addition, the human being is equipped with a mortal soul, which Timaeus describes as follows.

8. And within the body [the gods] built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind (*eidos*), which contains within it those dreadful but necessary disturbances: pleasure, first of all, evil's most powerful lure; then pains that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counselors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray. These they fused with unreasoning sense-perception and all-venturing lust, and so, as was necessary they constructed the mortal type (*genos*) of soul. (69C6-D6)

Timaeus goes on to distinguish between two parts with of mortal soul, corresponding to the two non-rational parts of the soul in the *Republic*. One part of the mortal soul, "the part exhibiting courage and anger" (*andreias kai thumou*, 70A3), is naturally superior to the other, which is responsible for "appetites for food and drink and whatever else it feels a need for on account of the body's nature" (70D7-8). The reason the mortal soul is necessary has to do with human beings' embodied nature. Unlike the cosmos itself, which Timaeus calls the Living Animal, the human being needs nourishment and hence needs to navigate his environment to get it. As a result, he needs sense-perception and the desiderative capacities that Timaeus describes above. These capacities, however, bring with them certain negative consequences and he explicitly cashes this out in the lines immediately after Passage 8 in terms of disruptions of the immortal soul's motions (69D6-E1).

This suffices, I take it, to show that, on Timaeus' view, vice is contrary to the nature of the soul. Taken in conjunction with the conception of the involuntary as the counter-natural, this yields the result that vice belongs to the soul involuntarily. Here a puzzle arises. Timaeus claimed when he discussed disease of the soul that the *person* who has vice, has vice involuntarily. This latter claim does not follow from the claim that vice belongs to the soul involuntarily. One might think, for example, that the person is identical to the soul-body composite. In that case, vice would only be contrary to the natural tendency of *one part* of the agent. And from this latter claim, it does not follow that vice is contrary to the agent's nature *simpliciter*. Aristotle makes a similar point in the discussion of force (*bia*) in *Eudemian Ethics* II 8, when he argues that akratic actions — actions that are done on the basis of a non-rational desire and contrary to the agent's view about what she ought to do — are not due to force even though he accepts that there is a

part of the agent that experiences force in these cases (1224b21-29). He cautions against moving from the claim that there is something in the soul that is subject to force, to the claim that the whole soul is subject to force. So too, if the soul is only one part of the *agent*, it would be a mistake to infer from the premise that vice is contrary to a nature of the soul, to the conclusion that vice is contrary to the nature of the agent.

What, then, are we to make of the fact that Timaeus does clearly make this inference? I suggest that it is because Timaeus identifies the agent with the agent's soul, thus ruling out the conceptual possibility mentioned. Indeed, there is abundant evidence throughout the Platonic corpus for such an identification.[26] In the *Phaedo*, for example, when Crito asks Socrates how he would like to be buried, Socrates responds by saying: "after I have drunk the poison I shall no longer be with you but will leave you to enjoy some good fortunes of the blessed"[27] (115D3-4). Since it is the soul, on the view that Socrates is alluding to here, that survives death, this remark can only indicate that Socrates thinks that he is identical to his soul. The very same sentiment is mirrored in a passage in the *Laws* where, in the course of prescribing funeral rites, the Athenian Stranger explains, even more explicitly, that the corpse only *looks* like the deceased and "our real self — our immortal soul, as it is called — departs"[28] (XII, 959B3-4). The evidence from the *Laws* is especially relevant for our purposes since the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* are widely held to belong to at least roughly the same period of Plato's philosophical career and that there are a

[26] The authoritative treatment of this topic is Lloyd Gerson's *Knowing Persons* (2003).
[27] Grube's translation from Cooper (1997).
[28] Saunders' translation from Cooper (1997).

great many important commonalities between the defenses of AT in the *Laws* and in the *Timaeus*, as I discuss elsewhere and as others have noticed also.[29]

I think, then, that there is good reason to attribute to Timaeus the view that the agent is identical to her soul. Hence, we are in a position to answer the question we started with, to explain why Timaeus thinks that vice is involuntary. Vice is involuntary because being or becoming vicious is contrary to the natural dispositions of the subject, the human soul which is identical to the agent. We can also make sense of the language that Timaeus uses which has led many commentators to the deterministic reading. The reason that in Passage 1 Timaeus says that it is the nurturers more than the nurtured whom one must allege as the cause of the latter's becoming vicious is that the origin of the vice is not within the agent himself, but rather in something else which interferes with the agent's own natural condition. Hence, it makes sense to attribute the vice more to whatever is responsible for the interference than it is to the thing that is interfered with. This takes us much of the way to understanding Timaeus' argument in that it

[29] See, for example, Saunders (1991). For a more detailed defense of the view that the *Timaeus* identifies the person with the soul see Gerson (2003, pp. 239-250).

explains the connection between the etiology of vice and the conclusion that vice is involuntary.[30]

5. Involuntariness and blameworthiness.

Timaeus does not only conclude that *vice* is involuntary, though. He also concludes that vice is not *blameworthy*, as we see in Passage 1. He thus implicitly accepts a principle that we might call *Involuntariness Exculpates* (or IE, for short), which enables him to infer that vice is not blameworthy from the claim that vice is involuntary. But why does Timaeus accept IE? This question is made all the more salient given the conception of involuntariness that I have argued is found in the Timaeus. If something's being involuntary is simply a matter of that thing's being counter-natural to the subject in the sense described, why should IE be true?

Before taking up this question, it is worth pausing briefly to emphasize that the very fact that Timaeus accepts IE is highly significant. Although the claim that vice is involuntary is

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[30] Here it is worth pausing briefly to consider the question of whether on Timaeus' view, vicious *actions* are involuntary as well. After all, Aristotle's main focus (and hence my main focus in the chapters that follow) is on voluntariness and involuntariness as they apply to actions. And it does not follow from the claim that vice is involuntary that vicious actions are also involuntary (a point Aristotle himself makes — see, *NE* III 5, 1114a31-b21). For this reason Weiss (1985) and Meyer (2014) have denied that Timaeus wishes to deny that vicious actions are involuntary and not blameworthy. I think, though, that the picture that I have argued for gives us very good reason for thinking that Timaeus would accept that vicious actions are involuntary. In the preceding I argued that the *Timaeus* conceives of the involuntary as what is counter-natural. The conception of soul at work in the dialogue allows us to make sense of how a condition of soul may be counter-natural. But it is even easier to see, I think, how an action can be counter-natural. Indeed, in the passage where we first observed the connection between the involuntary and the counter-natural, we already saw one illustration of how this might work: when a bit of earth is moved upwards, that motions is "involuntary" and forced because the rock has a natural tendency toward an opposing kind of motion. Similarly, the human soul by nature has tendencies toward certain kinds of motions which issue in certain activities, in the first place cognitive activities, but also actions informed by these cognitive activities. This connection is even emphasized in the discussion of disease of the soul by the language that Timaeus uses when he characterizes the activities of the person who suffers from an excess of marrow. It stands to reason then that just as the motions that the stone undergoes contrary to its natural tendencies, the actions that the human being carries out contrary to the soul's natural tendencies are involuntary.

found, as I mentioned, in many of Plato's dialogues it is not clear in those dialogues that the further principle that one is not *blameworthy* for things that are involuntary is also assumed, as it is in Aristotle. Hence, many scholars have doubted that the defenses of AT in these dialogues are meant to bear on blameworthiness at all.[31] Regardless of whether their interpretation of those dialogues is right, the fact that Timaeus accepts IE places his argument much closer to Aristotle's own concerns than one might expect.

The text of the *Timaeus* itself, however, does not give us much guidance as to *why* Timaeus accepts IE. Hence to provide an answer to this question we need to supply some missing premises to Timaeus' argument. This is precisely what the deterministic reading of the discussion of disease of the soul did. On that reading, the fact that involuntary things are not blameworthy may be adduced from the fact that involuntary things are beyond our control and one cannot be blamed for what is beyond one's control. Since I have rejected the deterministic reading, however, there are two remaining options available to me. One would be to deny that there is a story available in the *Timaeus* to explain why what is involuntary is not blameworthy. The other would be to suggest alternative, more plausible premises to attribute to Timaeus that would make sense of why he accepts IE. I shall take the latter option. Specifically, I shall argue that there is good reason to believe that *Timaeus* accepts the following two principles:

> (1) When an agent *A* has a condition of character involuntarily, *A* is not the cause (*aitios*) of that condition.

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[31] Šegvić (2000), for example, warns that "we must not assume that those who on Socrates' diagnosis act unwillingly are not to be blamed for their actions" (p. 5) and goes on to argue for an interpretation according to which they are still blameworthy. Meyer (1993), somewhat less cautiously, asserts that Plato's goal in arguing for AT, all throughout the corpus "is not, of course, to absolve wrongdoers of responsibility or blame" (p. 95; cf. Meyer (2006, p. 149) and Weiss (1985)). Interestingly, Gulley (1965), after noting that "the *Gorgias* appears to assume that ignorance of the 'right' moral principles is both involuntary and blameworthy," goes on point out that in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, involuntariness is meant to exculpate (pp. 95-96).

(2) In order for *A* to be blameworthy for *x*, *A* must be the cause (*aitios*) of *x*.

These two claims together imply that if *A* has a condition of character involuntarily, *A* is not blameworthy for that condition. This is formulation of IE needed to get Timaeus from the claim that vice is involuntary to the claim that vice is not blameworthy.

Why think that Timaeus accepts (1)? Here it is worth returning, once again, the final sentence of Passage 1, when Timaeus says that it is the nurturers more than the nurtured who "one must allege as the cause" (*aitiateon*, 87A4) for the latter's vicious condition. In saying this Timaeus is clearly denying that the subjects of vicious conditions are themselves the cause (*aitos*) of their condition. And this claim is meant to follow, somehow, from the claim that the condition is not voluntary. This in and of itself gives us some reason for attributing (1) to Timaeus.

Moreover, the picture that I have argued for makes good sense of why Timaeus would hold (1). The Greek term *aitios*, which I have been translating as "cause," is an explanatory notion: for *x* to be the *aitos* of *y*, is for *x* to explain *y*. I think that Timaeus' conception of the involuntary as the counter-natural, makes good sense of why if a state is involuntary, the subject of that state does not explain why the state obtains. Consider, again, the example of a stone moving upwards that we encountered above. When a stone does this involuntarily, under the agency of a person, say, it does not do so *qua* stone. What explains the movement is not the fact that it has the nature of a stone but rather the fact that something else is exerting force on the stone, causing it to move in a way *contrary* to its natural tendency. A similar account applies to vice. What explains the presence of vice in a given agent, is not the agent's own nature (which,

as we saw, is identical to the nature of her soul), but rather something else's interfering with the agent's nature (in this case, the body).

These considerations make it plausible to attribute (1) to Timaeus. Once we attribute (1) to him, there is a plausible case to be made for attributing (2) to him as well. Consider, for example, the following case of what is plausibly a forced action. Suppose that Anders robs a bank because his family is being held captive by violent criminals who will kill them if Anders does not do as he is told. There is a clear, intuitive sense in which the primary cause of the forced action is not Anders himself. Anders, we may suppose, is an ordinary, law-abiding citizen. Hence, while Anders played *some* causal/explanatory role in bringing the bank robbery about, the primary cause is the behavior of the kidnappers. The fact that the behavior is not explained by Anders also makes sense of why it would not be reasonable to blame Anders for it. Plausibly, in order for someone to be blameworthy for an action, that action must reflect something bad about the agent. Because Anders' action is not explained by Anders himself, it fails to reflect anything noteworthy about him at all and hence fails this condition.

So too, if Timaeus accepts (1) he holds that in general involuntary actions/conditions are not explained by the subject and the preceding considerations suggest that it is that fact about involuntary actions/conditions which explains why the agent is not blameworthy for them. I conclude, then, that the best way to make sense of Timaeus' endorsement of IE is by attributing these two principles to him.

6. Conclusion

If the foregoing picture is right then Timaeus' argument for AT is of considerable philosophical interest. For an action to be voluntary, it must be caused by the agent's rational soul which If this picture is right, then according to the conception of voluntariness in the *Timaeus*, for something to be voluntary it must be caused by the agent *qua* rational. The basis for this conclusion, to put it very briefly, is that humans are rational creatures and since vice represent an abrogation of their rational nature, when an agent does suffer from vice, it must be ultimately caused by something other than the agent itself. Aristotle agrees that human beings are fundamentally rational beings and this explains the substantial overlap with this view and the views that I shall argue are found in Aristotle's two treatments of the voluntary. I turn to Aristotle next.

2.

Praiseworthiness, evaluability, and accountability in Aristotle

1. Introduction

In the chapters that follow I shall provide separate treatments of the accounts of voluntary action in the *NE* and the *EE*, beginning with the *EE* in the next chapter and treating the *NE* in Chapters 4 and 5.[1] In both cases my goal will be the same: to get clear on how the accounts of the voluntary are meant to tell us about praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. Here I present the first part of my answer by introducing a concept that I shall call *accountability*:[2] the accounts of the voluntary tell us something about when an agent is *accountable* for an action where accountability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the agent to be praiseworthy or blameworthy for that action. The reason it is a necessary condition is that for an agent to be praiseworthy or blameworthy for an action, that action must be caused in a certain way by the

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[1] My motivation for treating the two accounts separately is partly methodological and partly substantive. The methodological reason is that there is a real and difficult question about just how much and where the two accounts differ and in order to answer this question each account needs to be considered on its own right before the two are compared. I think that once one does do that one finds that the accounts differ quite dramatically. Hence, my second reason for treating them separately is that I think they present two related but competing pictures of voluntariness and its relation to accountability.

[2] Notice that I am using the term "accountability" in my own, stipulatively-defined sense. This usage of the term should not be confused with the usage sometimes found in recent work on moral responsibility (see, for example, Watson (1996) and Fischer and Tognazzini (2011)).

agent himself. When it is caused in the right way, the agent is accountable for it. But accountability is not a sufficient condition because even ethically insignificant actions may be caused by the agent in the relevant way. While the agent is accountable for these actions, they are not praiseworthy or blameworthy (there is nothing for the agent to be praised or blamed *for*). Aristotle's accounts of voluntariness are meant to answer the question what the relevant connection between the agent and the action must be for the agent to be accountable for it. This is the question with which I shall be primarily concerned in the chapters that follow.

"Accountability," understood in this way, however, does not correspond to any term in Aristotle's own language. Hence my aim in this chapter is to show that Aristotle's texts do, nonetheless, support attributing some such concept to him. I begin, in section 2, by presenting a preliminary case for thinking that introducing some such concept is necessary. The concerns that I raise there have motivated many commentators to employ the concept of moral responsibility in their glosses of Aristotle. This, however, is problematic, and hence, to find an alternative, I turn, in section 3, to the remarks about praiseworthiness that occur in both the *EE* and the *NE*. Those remarks show, I argue, that a necessary condition for praiseworthiness or blameworthiness is that the praiseworthy or blameworthy thing be caused in a certain way by some quality that belongs to the agent. When an action meets this latter condition, I shall say that the agent is *evaluable* for it. This suggests that part of how Aristotle's accounts of voluntariness are meant to tell us about praiseworthiness and blameworthiness is by telling us about when an agent is *evaluable* for an action. But Aristotle's main focus is specifically on the praise and blame that attaches to *moral* agents, whereas an agent may be evaluable in the sense I have defined that term without being a

moral agent. Hence, in section 4, I show how Aristotle has the resources to distinguish a specific, ethical variety of evaluability. This variety of evaluability is what I call accountability.

2. The problem

It is clear that the fact that an action is voluntary is not meant to be a *sufficient* condition for that action to be praiseworthy or blameworthy. A mundane action — for example, making myself a cup of coffee in the morning — is not the sort of thing that Aristotle would think is either praiseworthy or blameworthy since actions like this lack the requisite ethical or moral importance. This suggests that there are at least two conditions that an action must satisfy for the agent to be praiseworthy or blameworthy for it: Condition 1 is that the action must be ethically or morally important (failure to meet this condition is why mundane actions are not praiseworthy or blameworthy); Condition 2 is what the accounts of voluntary action concern. A harmful action done in blameless ignorance, for example, is ethically important *qua* harmful, but since, on Aristotle's accounts, this action would be involuntary, it is not blameworthy. What it is about the fact that this action is involuntary that makes it inappropriate to blame the agent for it?

One popular response is to say that the agent is not *morally responsible* for the action in this case, whereas one *is* morally responsible for all of one's voluntary actions. Hence one way of filling out Condition 2 would be by appealing to moral responsibility: a voluntary action is one that the agent is morally responsible for and hence Aristotle's accounts are meant to tell us about moral responsibility.

This response, although it has obvious appeal, is not unproblematic. Not only does "moral responsibility" not correspond to anything in Aristotle's own language, but certain things that he says suggest that it cannot be true that agents are always morally responsible for their

voluntary actions. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (at least), Aristotle is willing to say that non-human animals and small children do things voluntarily (III 2, 1111a24-26). But it seems bizarre to say that these agents are morally responsible for these things that they do.[3]

This suggests that we ought to look for an alternative way of fleshing out Condition 2, one that, moreover, is textually well-grounded. I think it is possible to do this on the basis of certain of Aristotle's remarks about praiseworthiness. Those remarks will be the focus of the next section.

3. Praiseworthiness

Aristotle raises the question of the conditions under which something is praiseworthy in *NE* I 12 in the context of investigating whether happiness (*eudaimonia*) is itself something praiseworthy (*epainetos*) or rather something honorable (*timios*). He responds by providing brief sketch of some necessary conditions for praiseworthiness:

> 2. Whatever is praiseworthy appears to be praised for what it is like (*tô(i) poion ti einai*) and its state in relation to something (*pros ti pôs echein*). We praise the just and the brave person for instance, and in general the good person and virtue, because of their actions and achievements; and we praise the strong person, the good runner, and each of the others because he naturally has a certain quality (*tô(i) poion tina pephukenai*) and is in a certain state in relation to (*echein pôs pros*) something good and excellent. (1101b12-18)

[3] It seems, for example, that the concept of moral responsibility as philosophers today usually employ it is closely linked to the concept of moral agency. See, for example, Eshleman (2014): "Philosophical reflection on moral responsibility has a long history. One reason for this persistent interest is the way the topic seems connected with our conception of ourselves as 'persons.' Many have held that one distinct feature of persons is their status as morally responsible agents, a status resting—some have proposed—on a special kind of control that only they can exercise." From this Eshleman infers that "a comprehensive theory of moral responsibility" would have to include an elucidation of "the criteria for being a moral agent, i.e., one who qualifies generally as an agent open to responsibility ascriptions." For a more detailed critique of the attribution of the concept of moral responsibility to Aristotle, see Cooper (2013).

The first question to address here is what the object of praise is. On the one hand Aristotle says that the object of praise is a person of a certain sort ("the just person, the brave person, in general the good person"), but later on in the same sentence he says that the object of praise is virtue. It is easy to see how these two claims are consistent. When he says that we praise "the good person and virtue" (*ton agathon kai tên aretên*) I take it that the *kai* (tentatively translated "and") is epexegetic.[4] The point of adding *kai tên aretên* is to make more precise what we praise when we praise the good person, namely we praise that person's virtue. The inclusion of the athlete, however, under the rubric of agents that are praised suggests that it is not only *ethical* virtue that is praised but, rather, ethical virtue is one kind of excellence[5] that is praised among others. The athlete, however, presumably has an excellence of some sort on the basis of which he is praised — some sort of athletic excellence. What this passage suggests, then, is that the object of praise is an agent on the basis of some excellence, moral or otherwise, that she has. This may make one think that in order to be praised for something the agent must have some excellent *state*, since, as Aristotle explains later on, virtue is a state (*hexis*). Upon consideration, however, this passage seems to suggest that Aristotle is less stringent: the agent is praised for being of a certain sort (*tô(i) poion ti einai*, 1101b13). This suggests that the excellence at issue may not be a disposition, but rather simply a good quality.

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[4] K^b (codex Laurentianus) has τὸν ἀγαθόν τε καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν which is what Bywater prints in his OCT edition. The other manuscripts, however, omit the τε. If we take the K^b reading τὴν ἀρετὴν cannot be epexegetic in the way that I propose. For the reasons given above, however, I think that τὴν ἀρετήν must be epexegetic, hence I suggest that we take the reading with the best manuscript authority and omit the τε.

[5] The central meaning of the Greek term *aretê* is not *virtue* (in the sense of *moral virtue* — the sense that "virtue" usually has in English) but rather *excellence*, where this is not something specifically moral. (Hence it is perfectly natural for Aristotle to speak, e.g., of the *aretê* of a non-human animal or even an inanimate object).

The first sentence of the passage adds that the praiseworthy thing must be disposed in a certain way towards something (*kai pros ti pôs echein*). There are two different ways that sentence could be construed. Here again the question of how to construe the *kai* is important. According to one reading, the *kai* has a purely conjunctive function and, hence, Aristotle is stating two *separate* conditions that explain why something is praiseworthy: (i) it has a certain quality and (ii) it is disposed in a certain way toward other things. On the alternative reading, the *kai* is epexegetic and hence the phrase "its state in relation to something" would be meant to explain the preceding claim that what is praised is praised for what it is like. This is the reading taken by Susan Sauvé Meyer (1993, pp. 46-47). On her view, the reason generosity is praiseworthy, for example, is simply that generosity has good results, it issues in good actions.

There are, however very good reasons for preferring the first interpretation to this one. One reason is philosophical. It seems wrong that all dispositions that issue in good results are praiseworthy. Suppose, for example, that Tonje is a multi-billionaire, and she donates a few thousand dollars each year to charity, purely for purposes of receiving a tax break. She does not know or care whether her donations make a positive impact, but in fact they do. Someone else, Kjartan is of very modest means, but he gives the same amount to the same charity. He does so, moreover, on the basis of genuine concern for the cause and knowledge that the donations will have good effects. These two dispositions have the same effects (they both result in the same amount of money being donated to the charity) and, hence, if all that mattered was the effects of the dispositions, these two agents ought to be equally praiseworthy. But that seems obviously false. Tonje does not seem praiseworthy, whereas Kjartan does.

There is evidence, moreover, that Aristotle would say the same thing. In his discussions of decision (*prohairesis*) in both the *EE* and the *NE*, Aristotle remarks that it is more useful for purposes of determining praiseworthiness and blameworthiness to know an agent's decisions rather than to simply know his actions (*NE* III 2, 1111b4-6, *EE* II 11, 1228a2-4). The basis for this claim seems to be that by knowing the decision on the basis of which the agent acts, one is able to determine whether the action genuinely reflects something good about her as opposed to something neutral or even bad (as in the case of Tonje above).[6] This clearly suggests that simply being disposed toward good actions does not suffice to make a person praiseworthy. Rather, the quality that the agent has that disposes her to those actions must itself be something admirable.[7]

This reading is supported by remarks that Aristotle makes in the *EE* corresponding to his remarks in Passage 1, where, in the course of making the same point, he contrasts praise with encomium:

2. Praise is of virtue on account of deeds (*dia ta erga*[8]), but encomia are for deeds. And it is those who win who are crowned with wreaths, not those who have the ability to win but fail to do so. And we judge what someone is like (*hopoios tis estin*) by his works (*ek tôn ergôn*). [...] Therefore, felicitation, praise, and encomium are all different. An encomium speaks of a particular deed; praise of the agent's being of a certain sort in general (*toiouton einai katholou*); felicitation is of the end.[9] (II 1, 1219b8-16)

Here, again, we find the idea that praise is of virtue because of its works, but he also makes clear that praise presupposes a certain judgment not only about the goodness of the works but also

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[6] I discuss these passages further in what follows. See Chapter 3 section 4 and Chapter 5 section 3.

[7] This is not to say that the quality must be something praiseworthy. To say that, of course, would be to employ the *explanandum* in the *explanans*.

[8] In general I think that *ergon* in Aristotle is best translated as "work." Here, however, I retain Woods' (1992) translation "deed" because it puts greater emphasis on the fact that Aristotle is speaking of exercises of *agency*. I comment more on this below (p. 41).

[9] Woods (*ibid*.) translation with minor modifications.

about the agent. Hence the claims that "we judge what someone is like by his work" and "praise is for being of a certain sort in general."

A preliminary characterization of what it is to be praiseworthy for something, then, could run as follows. An agent *A* is praiseworthy for *x* if and only if: (i) *x* is good; (ii) *A* has a good quality *y*; and (iii) *y* causes *x*. By extension, if we substitute "good" in conditions (i) and (ii) with "bad," we get a characterization of when someone is blameworthy for something. This simple picture is problematic for two reasons, however. First, it leaves open the possibility of deviant causal pathways. Suppose, for example, that Vanja is a kind person who stops to help an elderly person cross the street. At the same time Heidi is on her way to commit a bank robbery, but as she drives by Vanja helping the person cross the street, Heidi gets distracted and gets lost, making her unable to find the bank until she eventually gives up. In this case there is a way in which Vanja's kind nature (a good quality she has) is responsible for preventing the bank from getting robbed (a good thing), and hence it seems to satisfy all three conditions. But it would be strange to say that Vanja is praiseworthy for the bank not being robbed. It was purely a matter of luck that her behavior and hence her good character had that effect. Similarly, suppose that an agent has a bodily disease. This is something bad that belongs to the agent (at least in some sense), and it may have bad effects, hence satisfying all three conditions, but it would be absurd to think on that basis alone that the agent is blameworthy for having the disease.

What are we to make of this problem? Well, first, I think it is important to recall that when Aristotle discusses praiseworthiness in the two passages above, he never indicates that he is giving both necessary and sufficient conditions. In fact, I think the most natural way to read the passages is as merely stating necessary conditions. The context is important on this point.

What Aristotle is trying to do is show that *eudaimonia* is not something praiseworthy. To do this he does not need to set out a complete account of praiseworthiness. All he needs to do is identify some necessary condition for praiseworthiness that *eudaimonia* fails to meet. This is precisely what he does when he points out that things are praiseworthy in part because of their connection to other things. This suggests that in a complete account of praiseworthiness Aristotle would include a condition about how more precisely the good quality on the part of the agent must be related to the good product. This finds further support from some of the language that Aristotle uses in both passages above. Notice that Aristotle does not say that we are praised for the mere *results* of our good qualities. He says that we are praised for "deeds" (*erga*) and "actions" (*praxeis*). The difference is important. If I have a disease that has bad effects — it gives me headaches, for example — the disease does not requires any input from my agency to achieve its effects. In this way, it differs from paradigm cases of qualities that issue in blameworthy actions. A vicious state of character yields bad results *through the subject's agency*. This suggests that by using the language of agency, Aristote means to allude to the fact that we are only praiseworthy for things that are brought about by us *in a certain way* — for example, in such a way as to involve our own agency somehow.

Hence condition (iii) needs to be replaced with a formulation that restricts the ways in which the agent's good quality causes the action. But what would such a formulation — (iii*) — be like? I think, in fact, that this is precisely the question that Aristotle's accounts of voluntary action are meant to answer. To see this, consider an example. Suppose that Geir is a good father, but is taken away from his family by kidnappers. Leaving his family, obviously, is something ethically significant; hence, it meets Condition 1 and (i). We may even suppose that it is caused,

in some way, by a bad disposition that Geir has. Perhaps the people who kidnapped him were mobsters, and the reason they kidnapped him is that he borrowed some money from them to finance a gambling habit, and he was unable to pay them back on time (suppose, further, that he could not have foreseen this consequence of not paying them back in time). It follows that his action satisfies condition (ii). Nonetheless, it does not seem that Geir's bad habit brought about the bad effect in such a way that he is properly blamed for it. Hence it fails (iii*). And the reason it fails (iii*), presumably, will have to do with the fact that the action is involuntary.

This insight puts us in a position to provide an answer to the question of how to specify Condition 2. When an action satisfies (iii*) it manifests the agent's desires and beliefs in a way that other actions do not. Hence there is a type of evaluation that is only appropriate of agents for actions that satisfy (iii*). For this reason, let us say that when an action satisfies condition (iii*) he is evaluable for that action. Evaluability, understood in this way is an attractive way of filling in Condition 2: to find a voluntary action is to find an action that the agent is evaluable for. Since to praise or blame someone involves evaluating that person for something, praiseworthiness and blameworthiness presuppose evaluability.

4. Ethical evaluability or accountability

It is worth pointing out that the concept of evaluability, understood in this way, need not be restricted to moral agents. In fact it is easy to see a sense in which a non-human agent is evaluable for its voluntary actions and not for its involuntary actions. This allows my account to avoid the problem faced by commentators who employ the language of moral responsibility. But it brings with it a challenge of its own.

Consider for example, the following case. A tiger attacks a village, killing and eating a villager. This event is bad, and we may suppose that it was caused in by a bad feature the tiger has — the disposition to attack human beings. The connection between the bad disposition and the bad event, moreover seems to be the right sort for the tiger to be *evaluable* for it. It is not as if the tiger attacked the villager on accident; the tiger acted voluntarily. And as such its action does reflect in a certain way the desires and beliefs (or quasi-beliefs) the tiger has. It would be quite odd, however, to think the tiger is blameworthy, at least in the same way that a person would be blameworthy if she haphazardly slaughtered a villager. The difference I take it is that the human being is a moral agent and thus the proper object for a specific sort of evaluation that the tiger is not the proper object of.

This is important for our purposes. Aristotle's accounts of voluntary action are primarily concerned with praise and blame *of the sort that is appropriate for virtuous and vicious actions*. This suggests that to understand the connection between voluntariness and praise- and blameworthiness, we ought to distinguish between different varieties of evaluability. That this should be possible is indicated by the fact that in Passage 1 and elsewhere Aristotle recognizes non-moral varieties of praise and blame — for example, praise for athletic accomplishments. When someone is praised for an athletic accomplishment she is evaluated *qua* athlete. When someone is praised for an intellectual accomplishment she is evaluated *qua* thinker. When someone is praised for a virtuous act she is evaluated *qua* ethical agent. When an agent is evaluable *qua* ethical agent, let us say that she is *ethically evaluable* or, to use a somewhat less clumsy phrase, let us say that she is *accountable*. Since Aristotle's focus in his discussions of voluntary action is with this specific variety of evaluability, I shall primarily be concerned with

accountability in my treatment of Aristotle's discussions. Hence, although every voluntary action may be evaluable, only normal, adult humans are also accountable for their voluntary actions, since only adult human beings are ethical agents.

5. Conclusion

Aristotle's remarks about praiseworthiness make clear that for someone to be praiseworthy or blameworthy for something, that thing must be caused by him in a certain way. When an action is caused by someone who is a moral agent in the right way, he is *accountable* for the action. Aristotle's accounts of voluntary action are meant to tell us about when an agent is accountable for an action. The aim of the remaining chapters is to get clear on how, on Aristotle's view, voluntariness relates to accountability, understood in this way. Answering this question will allow us to see what Aristotle thinks makes someone accountable for an action. I conclude with some forward-looking remarks.

Now, to answer the question of what the relationship between voluntariness and accountability is one must answer two subsidiary questions. The first is the question of what the extensional relationship is between the class of voluntary actions and the class of actions for which the agent is accountable. Is one accountable for *all* of one's voluntary actions? Is one accountable for *only* one's voluntary actions? Once one has answered that question there is a question about what *explains* the extensional relationship at issue. If, for example, it turns out that an agent is accountable for all of her voluntary actions, that raises the question what it is about those actions in virtue of which the agent is accountable for them. Similarly, if it turns out that an agent is accountable for some actions that are not voluntary, that raises the question of

what feature those actions have in virtue of which the agent is accountable for them and how those actions differ from voluntary actions.

Now, part of the answer to the extensional question is fairly clear in both the *NE* and the *EE*: both treatments agree that if an action is involuntary the agent is not accountable for it and that if the action is voluntary and the agent is a normal adult human being, she is accountable for it. These two facts alone do not completely answer the extensional question, though, because they leave open the possibility that there are actions which are neither voluntary nor involuntary in which case there is a question about whether one is ever accountable for actions of that type. The *NE* explicitly acknowledges that there are actions which are neither voluntary nor involuntary — non-voluntary (*ouch hekousion*) actions —- and, in Chapter 4 I argue that one is sometimes accountable for actions of this type. In Chapter 5 I show how this has important implications for how we answer the explanatory question of the *NE*.

In the next chapter, however, I am concerned exclusively with the *EE* and there the extensional question is considerably less complicated. For one, there is less textual evidence one way or the other to answer the question whether Aristotle acknowledges non-voluntary actions, and, second, the little that he does say on this topic suggests that he thinks the class of voluntary actions is coextensive with the class of actions for which one is accountable.[10] Hence, I shall bracket a more detailed investigation of the extensional question as it pertains to the *EE*, and take as my starting point only the very modest assumption that in the case of the actions of normal adult agents, the fact that an action is voluntary implies that the agent is accountable for the action. The question I shall focus on is what explains this implication.

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[10] See II 6, 1223a9-15 (= Passage 1 in the next chapter).

3.

Praxis, *dianoia*, and the voluntary in the *Eudemian Ethics*

1. Introduction

The portion of the *EE* account of voluntary action that bears most directly on the question of why one is accountable for one's voluntary actions is the chapter that introduces that discussion, *EE* II 6. It is often thought that, for Aristotle, the reason one is accountable for one's voluntary actions is simply that one is causally-responsible for them. If this reading is right, Aristotle seems to have made an important mistake.[1] Blaming someone for a given event involves more than simply viewing that agent as causally-responsible for the event; one might think, for example, that it also requires viewing the agent as a member of one's moral community who can be expected to respond to reasons that she has to act in certain ways.[2] I think, however, that there is decisive evidence, in the *EE* at least, that Aristotle does not make this mistake. To see this we need to appreciate the definition of voluntary action that Aristotle ultimately arrives at in *EE* II 9. There

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[1] For one version of this criticism of Aristotle, see Frankfurt (1987, p. 39); cf. Broadie (1991, pp. 138-139).

[2] Hence Watson (1996) famously distinguishes two faces of moral responsibility: attributability and accountability where an action's being attributable to an agent has simply to do with the connection between the action and the agent whereas accountability (in the sense in which Watson uses that term) has to do with potential interactions the agent may have with members of her moral community (see also Smith (2007)).

the voluntary (*to hekousion*) is defined as what is done on the basis of thought (*kata dianoian*, 1225b1).[3] I shall argue that for an action to be done on the basis of thought, in the relevant sense, that action must be done as a result of the agent taking something as a reason for acting. Moreover, when Aristotle defines the voluntary in this way, he means to identify the feature of one's voluntary actions in virtue of which one is accountable for them. Thus, in the *EE* Aristotle links accountability with the capacity to take things as reasons for acting and, in doing so, he is enunciating for perhaps the first time in the history of philosophy an idea that has since found a great many distinguished proponents.[4]

Before we can understand the definition of voluntary action that we find in *EE* II 9, however, we need first to consider the way in which Aristotle links voluntariness to accountability in the chapter that introduces the topic of voluntary action, *EE* II 6. There the fact that one is accountable for one's voluntary actions is explained by reference to the fact that when one acts voluntarily one is "responsible" (*aitios*) for the action. I argue in section 2 that being responsible for an action, in the relevant sense, is merely a matter of being *causally*-responsible for that action. This does not, however, mean that Aristotle has simply collapsed accountability into causal responsibility. At the very beginning of *EE* II 6 (1222b15-20), Aristotle indicates that he is interested in the capacity to originate *actions*, where an action (*praxis*) is understood as something non-rational animals (nonhuman animals and children) are not capable of

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[3] In this respect the *EE* differs from the *NE* which does not make use of *dianoia* at all in its discussion of voluntary action.

[4] The first figure that comes to mind on this topic is Kant who links free will with the ability to grasp and act for the sake of the moral law (hence his famous dictum: "A free will and a will under the moral law is one and the same" (*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* III, 447.6–10)). There are many examples among more recent philosophers. Compare, for example, Timothy Scanlon's view in *What We Owe Each Other* (1998).

performing.[5] I argue in section 3 that the fact that Aristotle is specifically concerned with causal responsibility *for actions* (understood in this narrow way)[6] suggests that he is concerned with the kind of causal responsibility that agents have in virtue of exercising their capacities for practical reason. This brings us back to Aristotle's definition of the voluntary as what is done on the basis of thought. In section 4 I argue that by defining the voluntary in this way, Aristotle means to give an explanation of what more specifically distinguishes actions from mere animal behavior: humans alone are capable of *action* because humans alone are capable of taking things as reasons to act. The fact that voluntary actions involve taking things as reasons for acting also explains why one is accountable for one's voluntary actions: one is praiseworthy for an action only if it reflects a commendable response to reasons, and one is blameworthy for an action only if it reflects an objectionable response.

2. Being responsible (*aitios*)

Before I turn to the concept of responsibility for action in *EE* II 6, it will be useful to begin with some general remarks about the Greek word *aitios*, which I am translating as "responsible." The reason that I have chosen to translate the term in this way is that it constitutes a neutral alternative between two senses *aitios* may have. On the one hand, it may be used to mean "responsible" in the sense of "culpable," for example, in a legal setting.[7] On the other

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[5] Aristotle thus distinguishes the conception of action at play in *EE* II from the broader conception according to which he is sometimes willing to attribute *praxis* to nonhuman animals or speak of them as "acting" (*prattein*). For the broader notion see, for example: *De Caelo* II 12, 292b1, *Historia Animalium* I 1, 487a12, VIII 1, 589a3, IX 49, 631b1. For the narrow conception see also *NE* VI (=*EE* V) 2, 1139a20.

[6] In what follows I shall consistently use "action" to translate the term *praxis* in the sense that Aristotle uses it in *EE* II 6. Hence "action" should be understood to refer specifically to a kind of activity of which only humans are capable.

[7] See LSJ s.v. αἴτιος I 1.

hand, it can be used to mean "responsible" in the sense of "causally-responsible" where this does not necessarily imply culpability.[8] A rainstorm, for example, may be causally-responsible for the ground becoming wet but, clearly, being responsible in this way does not imply culpability or accountability for that event.[9] To distinguish between these two ways in which "responsibility" may be understood, let us call the latter kind *C-responsibility* (short for "causal responsibility") and the former kind *M-responsibility* (short for "moral responsibility").[10] One of the basic questions that needs to be answered to understand *EE* II 6, then, is whether Aristotle uses *aitios* to refer to C-responsibility or M-responsibility.

On this question, I begin by considering the passage that bears most immediately on the main topic I am interested in, namely the connection between voluntariness and accountability. In the passage in question Aristotle motivates the discussion of voluntary action that is to follow (in chapters 7-9) by pointing out that the question whether an action is voluntary or involuntary bears on whether the agent is responsible for that action. Whether the agent is responsible for that action, in turn, bears on whether the agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy for it:

1. Now, since [i] virtue and vice and what these produce are in the one case praised and in the other blamed (for [ii] one is not blamed or praised on account of things belonging to one by necessity or luck or nature, but for all the ones for which we ourselves are responsible—for all the things for which another person is responsible, he gets both the blame and the praise), it is clear that [iii] both virtue and vice concern those things for which one is oneself responsible and[11] the action-origin. We must, then, get a grasp on

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[8] See LSJ (*ibid*.) I 2.

[9] In this case, the storm would be what Aristotle in the *Physics* calls an "efficient-cause" or "moving-cause" where this refers to something which functions as a cause by being "that from which the change first comes" (II 3, 194b29-30).

[10] By stipulatively using "M-responsibility" in this way I do not mean to take a position on the complicated question whether Aristotle has a notion of moral responsibility corresponding to the one employed by present-day philosophers.

[11] My translation of καί as "and" here is merely provisional. I return to the question of how it should be understood below (p. 51).

> which things one is oneself responsible for and the action-origin.[12] Well, then, we all agree that [iv] all the things that are voluntary and that are dependent on each person's decision, of those he is responsible; whereas, [v] of all those that are involuntary he is not responsible.[13] (1223a9-15)[14]

Here we find a very clear connection between being responsible for an action and being accountable for that action. The fact that the actions that flow from virtue and vice are praised or blamed respectively (part (i)) is taken by Aristotle to imply that the person who performs such actions is responsible for them (part (iii)) and this inference is licensed by the parenthetical remark (part (ii)) that one is only praised or blamed for those things for which one is oneself responsible. Aristotle then goes on to use this connection between responsibility and accountability to motivate the discussion of voluntary action. It is useful to know whether an action is voluntary for purposes of determining whether the agent is accountable for that action because whether an action is voluntary bears on whether the agent is responsible for that action.

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[12] "Action-origin" translates ἀρχὴ πράξεων. The alternative way of construing this phrase would be to take πράξεων simply as stating the object of ἀρχὴ — to take it, that is, as stating the things that one is the origin of. The problem with this reading is that then the inclusion of the word seems redundant. There already seems to be an object for ἀρχὴ, namely the relative ὧν ("those things for which one is oneself responsible and origin of"). I construe πράξεων, then, as qualifying the kind of ἀρχὴ at issue. On this reading, Aristotle is saying that one bears a certain kind of responsibility for those things, one is a certain kind of origin in relation to those things, namely the kind of origin that issues in actions. This reading finds further confirmation from the fact that in the very next sentence Aristotle again employs precisely the same phrase (1223a15-16). The fact that Aristotle repeatedly uses these words together suggests that he means them to be taken together.

[13] Unless otherwise noted translations from the *EE* are from Cooper (unpublished) with minor modifications.

[14] ἐπεὶ δ' ἥ τε ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ κακία καὶ τὰ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔργα τὰ μὲν ἐπαινετὰ τὰ δὲ ψεκτά (ψέγεται γὰρ καὶ ἐπαινεῖται οὐ διὰ τὰ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ τύχης ἢ φύσεως ὑπάρχοντα, ἀλλ' ὅσων αὐτοὶ αἴτιοι ἐσμέν· ὅσων γὰρ ἄλλος αἴτιος, ἐκεῖνος καὶ τὸν ψόγον καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον ἔχει), δῆλον ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ κακία περὶ ταῦτ' ἐστιν ὧν αὐτὸς αἴτιος καὶ ἀρχὴ πράξεων. ληπτέον ἄρα ποίων αὐτὸς αἴτιος καὶ ἀρχὴ πράξεων. πάντες μὲν δὴ ὁμολογοῦμεν, ὅσα μὲν ἑκούσια καὶ κατὰ προαίρεσιν τὴν ἑκάστου, ἐκεῖνον αἴτιον εἶναι, ὅσα δ' ἀκούσια, οὐκ αὐτὸν αἴτιον. πάντα δ' ὅσα προελόμενος, καὶ ἑκὼν δῆλον ὅτι. δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ κακία τῶν ἑκουσίων ἂν εἴησαν.

If the action is voluntary, the agent is responsible for it (part (iv)) and if it is not voluntary, she is not responsible for it (part (v)).[15]

The very close connection that we see here between being responsible for an action and being praiseworthy or blameworthy for that action may make it tempting to think that when Aristotle employs the term *aitios* he has in mind M-responsibility. I think, however, that this would be a mistake. Notice that twice in Passage 1 Aristotle links responsibility with the notion of being the origin (*archê*) of an action in a phrase that I have tentatively translated "responsible and the action-origin" (*aitios kai archê praxeôn*, lines a15 and 16). This translation actually obscures the connection between being responsible and being the origin of an action somewhat. The words *aitios* and *archê* are linked by the word *kai* which, although it can be used simply to connect two items, it is also often used epexegetically, to introduce a clarification of the preceding word or phrase. If we construe it in this latter way the phrase would be better translated as "responsible, i.e. the action-origin." The reason this possible construal matters is that the notion of being the origin of an action is unambiguously causal. If, then, we are to understand responsibility for an action in terms of being the origin of that action, then the relevant notion of responsibility must be C-responsibility.

That we ought to understand responsibility for action in this way is made clear by what Aristotle has to say earlier in the chapter when he introduces the concept of an action-origin. At the very beginning of the chapter (1222b15-20), he points out that human beings differ from other animals in that human beings alone are origins of actions. He goes on to discuss what kind of origin an action-origin. In Greek the term *archê* can be used for something that originates

[15] Notice that Aristotle does not say that one is only accountable for one's voluntary actions. Hence, I will not assume that according to the *EE* one is only accountable for voluntary actions.

some kind of change as well as for things that serve as starting-points in some other way, for example, mathematical first principles. In *EE* II 6 Aristotle acknowledges this fact, but points out that in both cases the item in question gets to be an *archê* by being ultimately responsible (*aition*) for some result. A mathematical first principle is the ultimate cause or explanation of why some theorem obtains (1222b29-42) and, similarly, the agent is the ultimate cause of her voluntary actions (1223a4-9). The fact that Aristotle links the notion of being responsible for an action with the notion of being the origin of that action suggests that when Aristotle says that someone is *aitios* for an action he has in mind that the agent is the cause[16] of the action. Hence Aristotle's talk of responsibility should be understood as talk of C-responsibility.

If being responsible for an action is merely a matter of being the C-responsible for that action, then we might expect that being responsible for an action is merely a necessary condition for accountability. After all, a great many things — nonhuman animals, children, even inanimate objects — serve as efficient causes but (at least) not all of these are accountable for the things for which they are efficient causes of. Nonetheless, later on in his discussion, Aristotle clearly treats the fact that an agent has done something wrong voluntarily as sufficient to imply that that agent is blameworthy for the action.[17] Moreover, we saw that Passage 1 implies that voluntariness matters for the question whether the agent is accountable simply because voluntariness implies C-responsibility. There is a question, then, of why Aristotle attaches so much moral weight to

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[16] It is worth noting that there is a difference, in Aristotle's framework, between bearing some causal responsibility and being *the cause* of an action. Take an example. If Arvid tricks Björn into unwittingly putting poison into Christian's coffee, then Björn clearly bears some causal responsibility for the poisoning in that he was the one one who actually physically placed the poison in Christian's coffee. Nonetheless, I take it that on Aristotle's view Björn would not count as responsible for the action in the relevant sense because he was not the ultimate cause of Christian's being poisoned. That title belongs to Arvid, who orchestrated the poisoning and simply used Björn as a means to carrying it out. This case is based on a similar one that occurs in *EE* II 9 and which I discuss below (p. 73).

[17] See, for example, *EE* II 9, 1228a7-11, quoted as Passage 2 below.

causal-responsibility. Even if we suppose that Aristotle is specifically talking about the C-responsibility that adult human agents have for their actions, there still is a question about why C-responsibility plays the robust role that it does in explaining why an agent is accountable for a given action. I turn to that question now.

I shall argue that to understand the moral significance that Aristotle attaches to causal responsibility for actions, one must scrutinize the notion of an action (*praxis*) that Aristotle employs, what something's being a *praxis* entails. This is something that has not been done adequately by any of the commentators on the *EE* with whom I am familiar. Susan Sauvé Meyer (1993), for example, notes that when Aristotle speaks of responsibility in *EE* II 6 he is speaking specifically about responsibility for actions, but the only feature of actions that she appeals to in providing her own interpretation is that an action, as Aristotle points out, is a kind of change (*kinêsis,* 1222b29). From this she concludes that the kind of responsibility at issue is that of efficient causation or what I am calling C-responsibility (p. 38). Meyer does, however, have an account of what, in addition to C-responsibility, is required to be accountable for an action. It will be useful briefly to consider this account before turning to the notion of *praxis*, not only because Meyer's reading is one that many have found attractive,[18] but also because the same considerations that speak against her view speak in favor of the view that I shall go on to defend.

Meyer ascribes to Aristotle the view that what makes an agent praiseworthy or blameworthy for an action is that that action must be good or bad and result from a correspondingly good or bad disposition. The reason one is accountable for the actions one is C-

[18] Bobzien (2014), for example.

responsible for is simply that when a normal adult agent[19] is C-responsible for an action, that action is caused by that agent's condition of character, which in the case of virtue is a good disposition and in the case of vice is a bad disposition.[20] Meyer's reading, then, has two main theses: one having to do with the connection between character and C-responsibility and the other having to do with the connection between character and accountability. I am willing to grant the connection between C-responsibility and states of character. What I shall argue, however, is that the second thesis is wrong: more is required to explain why an agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy for an action than Meyer's account allows.

In the preceding chapter I have raised some strong considerations against Meyer's view. Here, however, I shall focus on what I think is the strongest consideration against Meyer's view which comes from considering one of Aristotle's motivations for treating the topic of voluntary action in the first place. Repeatedly throughout his discussions of voluntary action in both the *NE* and the *EE*, Aristotle makes it clear that one of the points he wants to argue for on the basis of his account is that both virtuous and vicious actions are voluntary and hence vicious actions are blameworthy just as virtuous ones are praiseworthy. One such passage occurs toward the end of Aristotle's whole discussion of voluntariness and related topics in *EE* II 11. He concludes by

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[19] The qualification "normal adult" is important because, as Meyer points out (*ibid*., 52), children and nonhuman animals act voluntarily but do not have states of moral character.

[20] Meyer's own formulation is somewhat more complex. Pointing to Aristotle's view that whenever an animal moves itself, there are three relata - a moved thing, a moved mover, and an unmoved mover - Meyer suggests that the unmoved mover in the case of normal adult agents (i.e. people who have a settled state of character) is precisely their moral character:

> Aristotle's introduction to the account of voluntariness indicates that he takes the voluntary acts of the self-movers he is interested in (those who are morally responsible for their voluntary activities) to be the products of their states of character [...] This suggests that the agent's states of character, which together comprise her moral character, constitute the causal power [viz. the unmoved mover] that Aristotle takes to be essential to the self-mover. So the agent's moral character would appear to be the unmoved mover of her voluntary activities. (*Ibid*., 154.)

drawing attention to what he takes to be an attractive consequence of the account that he has just concluded:

2. So vice and virtue must be voluntary, for there is no necessity to do vicious things. That is why vice is blamed and why virtue is praised; for reprehensible and bad acts that are involuntary are not blamed, nor are good ones praised, but only the voluntary ones are. (1228a7-11)[21]

When Aristotle says "there is no necessity to do vicious things" he is alluding to the discussion of necessity and force in *EE* II 8 which has as a consequence that vicious and akratic actions do not count as due to force or necessity. Here he uses this finding to argue for what he treats as a substantive conclusion, namely that vicious actions are voluntary and hence blameworthy.[22]

The reason Aristotle wants to make this point is that he is concerned to rebut the Asymmetry Thesis. On the face of it, Aristotle's concern with this thesis seems inconsistent with Meyer's explanation of what makes someone accountable for an action. After all, if Aristotle held that what explains why an action is blameworthy is that it is bad and flows from a bad disposition, it would seem to result straightaway that vicious actions are blameworthy, with no further argument needed. Hence it seems strange that Aristotle would devote considerable effort to showing that such actions are voluntary. Meyer acknowledges that Aristotle is concerned to

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[21] ὥστ' ἀνάγκη τήν τε κακίαν ἑκούσιον εἶναι καὶ τὴν ἀρετήν· οὐδεμία γὰρ ἀνάγκη τὰ μοχθηρὰ πράττειν. διὰ ταῦτα καὶ ψεκτὸν ἡ κακία καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ ἐπαινετόν· τὰ γὰρ ἀκούσια αἰσχρὰ καὶ κακὰ οὐ ψέγεται οὐδὲ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἐπαινεῖται, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἑκούσια.

[22] It is worth noting that the argument in Passage 2 mirrors that in Passage 1 in certain ways. In the latter passage, as we saw, Aristotle provides a brief argument showing the connection between virtue and vice on the one hand and voluntariness on the other: virtue and vice and their products are praised and blamed and hence agents must be responsible for virtue and vice and their products. This latter argument may give the impression that the question whether virtuous or vicious actions are praiseworthy or blameworthy was never really under consideration. But Passage 2 suggests otherwise. Passage 2 presents an argument for the same thesis, but this time relying on the findings of the intervening discussion of voluntary action. This suggests that in Passage 1 when Aristotle asserted that virtuous and vicious actions are praiseworthy and blameworthy he was not simply asserting something he thought to be trivially true, but rather was advancing a substantive point that was to be justified by the discussion of voluntary action that follows.

rebut the Asymmetry Thesis and provides an explanation for this, but I do not think her explanation is satisfactory. According to Meyer, states of character are praiseworthy and blameworthy because they produce good or bad actions, and Aristotle "develops the account of voluntariness to capture these conditions of production. It is […] a constraint on his account that it count as voluntary the actions produced by both virtue and vice" (p. 132). On Meyer's view, then, when Aristotle tries to show that vicious actions are voluntary all he is really trying to show is that vicious actions are caused by vicious character states in the same way that virtuous actions are caused by virtuous character states.

This interpretation, however, sits well neither with what Aristotle himself says nor with the defenses of the Asymmetry Thesis in Plato's dialogues. In *EE* II 7, for example, one of the worries that Aristotle entertains is that actions done on the basis of non-rational desires are involuntary because non-rational desires (at least sometimes) exercise compulsive force (*bia*).[23] He responds to this worry in II 8 by providing an account of compulsive force that shows that in the cases at issue the agent does not act by force.[24] In entertaining this worry, Aristotle is taking it for granted that some agents have a bad character state — in this case a disposition to feel excessive desires of some kind — and that this bad character state issues in bad actions, but he nonetheless wants to show that such actions are voluntary and hence blameworthy. The fact that he wants to argue for this clearly suggests, *pace* Meyer, that he does not take the fact that these actions are bad and caused by a bad disposition to suffice to show that they are blameworthy.

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[23] 1223b18-24 *et passim*.
[24] 1224a30-a2.

But if Meyer's account of why Aristotle cares about the Asymmetry Thesis is wrong, why *does* he care about it? I think the findings of Chapter 1 help on this point. There we found in the *Timaeus* an argument for thinking that vice as a condition of the soul is analogous to disease as a condition of the body, and the explicit inference from this idea to the further conclusion that, just as bad bodily conditions are involuntary and not blameworthy, so too vicious conditions of character are involuntary and hence not blameworthy. This formulation of the paradox raises a challenge of considerable philosophical interest. Having a disposition that has bad results does not always suffice for the agent who has that disposition to be blameworthy, as the case of bodily disease shows. So, if one wants to say, as Aristotle does, that virtue and vice are praiseworthy or blameworthy respectively, one needs to specify what the relevant difference is between dispositions of character on the one hand and mere bodily dispositions on the other. That Aristotle is concerned to do this is well supported by texts in both the *EE* and the *NE*.[25] And, moreover, this fact cannot be accommodated by Meyer's reading. *Pace* Meyer, Aristotle does not simply assume that any disposition that has bad results is blameworthy, rather he wants to show that vicious dispositions, unlike bad bodily dispositions, are of the right sort for the agent to be blameworthy for the results.

But how does Aristotle's account of voluntary action actually respond to this version of the paradox? This brings me back to the role that the notion of an action plays in his account. As I pointed out before, Aristotle employs *praxis* in such a way as not to apply to the behavior of

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[25] In addition to the texts from the *EE* above, there are a number of texts in the *NE* that very clearly reflect this motivation. See especially, *NE* III 1, 1111a24-b3 and III 5, 21-29. In the latter passage, Aristotle, in the context of defending the view that virtue and vice are both voluntary, specifically takes up the topic of bodily diseases and argues that even they may sometimes be blameworthy, for example, if someone is blind as a result of "wine-guzzling" (*ex oinophlugias*, a27) as opposed to if one is blind by nature.

nonrational animals (children and nonhuman animals, for example). The reason is that the capacity to perform actions requires certain rational capacities: as I shall go on to argue, when an agent voluntarily performs an action, that agent is causally responsible for that action in virtue of exercising certain rational capacities, and this fact explains how bad conditions of character differ from bad conditions of the body. The former express themselves in exercises of the subject's agency, whereas the latter do not.[26] I turn to the concept of *praxis* now.

3. Action (*praxis*)

I begin by considering the passage in *EE* II 6 within which Aristotle first indicates his interest in action. As I pointed out before, the passage occurs at the very beginning of the chapter.

> 3. Well then: all substances are by nature origins of some sort. That is why each substance can generate many of the same kind as itself, for example, a human being generates human beings and, in general, being an animal, a thing generates animals, being a plant, plants. But in addition, the human being, alone among the animals, is an origin of certain actions. For of the other animals we would not say that any of them does actions. (1222b15-20)[27]

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[26] It is worth noting that the notion of a *praxis* as Aristotle employs it allows him to do much the same work that philosophers today sometimes employ the concept of a person to do. One natural way of replying to the version of the Socratic paradox discussed above, for example, would be to draw a distinction between the respective subjects of the disposition in question: diseases merely belong to the body, whereas conditions of character are conditions of the person herself. Aristotle (at least in the *EE*) gives no indication that he has a notion of a person as distinct from the human animal, but I take it that a crucial difference between the notion of a person and other sorts of creatures has to do with the differences between their respective capacities for practical reason (one might think, for example, as Frankfurt (1971) does, that what distinguishes persons from non-person agents is the capacity for second-order desires). So too, the distinction between actions and other forms of animal behavior is meant to track a distinction between different kinds of agents. Agents capable of *action* differ from other agents in the structure of their capacities for practical reason, as we shall see.

[27] εἰσὶ δὴ πᾶσαι μὲν αἱ οὐσίαι κατὰ φύσιν τινὲς ἀρχαί, διὸ καὶ ἑκάστη πολλὰ δύναται τοιαῦτα γεννᾶν, οἷον ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρώπους καὶ ζῷον ὂν ὅλως ζῷα καὶ φυτὸν φυτά. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ὅ γ' ἄνθρωπος καὶ πράξεών τινών ἐστιν ἀρχὴ μόνον τῶν ζώων· τῶν γὰρ ἄλλων οὐθὲν εἴποιμεν ἂν πράττειν.

The contrast here between actions and mere animal behavior is introduced by a more general contrast between those ways of being origins (*archai*) that are distinctively human and those that are not. Something serves as the origin of other things like itself, for example, merely insofar as it is a living thing (and as such has the capacity for reproduction). So although one way that humans function as origins is by reproducing, this is not a way of being an origin that they have *qua* human, but rather *qua* living thing. In this respect, the kind of origins that human beings are insofar as they have the capacity to reproduce differs from the kind of origins that they are insofar as they have the capacity to produce actions. And it is because actions reflect a distinctively human capacity in this way that Aristotle wishes to call special attention to them. But what is significant about the capacity to produce actions is not *merely* the fact that only humans have it. After all, there are countlessly many capacities that fit that description that it would be very odd for Aristotle to devote special attention to. What is important about actions in particular, rather, is that they bear a special connection to humans' rational capacities and these rational capacities, in turn, explain the special moral status that humans have. To see this we need briefly to consider the role that the concept of action plays in the project of the *EE* as a whole.

The main topic that the *EE* is concerned with is happiness (*eudaimonia*) and the main goal of the treatise is to cash out what happiness consists in and how it comes about. Early on in the treatise Aristotle connects the ability to attain happiness with humans' rational capacities. In I 7 after remarking that "happiness has been agreed to be the greatest and best of human goods" he goes on to explain the inclusion of the qualification "human" on the class of goods at issue as follows:

4. We say "human" because happiness may perhaps exist also for some other being superior to us — a god, for example. None of the other animals that are naturally inferior to human beings have any claim to this description: no horse or bird or fish is happy, nor any other thing that there is which does not, as the proverb has it, have a share by its nature in the divine (*en tê(i) phusei metechei theiou tinos*).[28] (1217a21-29)

When Aristotle refers to the fact that humans by nature have a share in the divine, he is referring to the rational part of the soul.[29] The point he is making is that happiness for human beings is possible because human beings resemble the gods at least to the extent that humans, like gods, share in reason. Thus, any account of what happiness consists in must make some reference to this fact about human beings.

The task of providing such an account is taken up at the beginning of book II where Aristotle investigates what kind of thing happiness is. He concludes that it is an activity of the soul and, recognizing that there are multiple parts or aspects of the soul, he goes on to address the question of what parts or aspects of the soul contribute to happiness. He concludes that it is an activity of the parts of the soul that share in reason: the part that is itself capable of reasoning, the rational part, but also the parts that although not directly rational, are capable of "listening to reason" in a way, namely the appetitive part (the part responsible for desires for bodily pleasures like food or sex) and the spirited part (the part responsible for desires for social goods, esteem, honors, etc.).[30] The other parts of the soul (e.g., the vegetative part — the part responsible for the

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[28] Translation from Woods (1992).

[29] Aristotle often associates humans' rational capacities with the divine. See, e.g., *De Anima* I 4, 408b29, *NE* X 7, 1177b28, *Generation of Animals* II 3, 737a10, *Protrepticus* fr. 108.

[30] The sense in which these parts are capable of listening to reason is that they are capable of being trained by reason to react in certain ways. For example, a person who believes that she should no longer eat meat may still feel appetitive desires to eat meat but over time can train herself so that her appetitive desiderative dispositions agree with her considered judgment that she should not eat meat.

operation of basic bodily functions) do not make a contribution to happiness because they do not contribute to action:

5. Any other part of the soul that there may be, the vegetative, for example, is removed from consideration. But the parts we have mentioned are peculiar to the human soul.[31] (This is why the virtues of the nutritive and the growing parts are not human virtues either.) For if a part belongs to a human being[32] *qua* human being, it necessarily includes reasoning as[33] a starting point and action.[34] (1219b36-1220a4)[35]

This contrast between the parts of the soul that are peculiar (*idia*) to the human soul versus those that are not mirrors the contrast that we found in Aristotle's remarks about action in Passage 3. The difference is that here we have an explanation as to why the fact that only humans have these parts of the soul is relevant: the parts of the soul that are peculiar to human beings involve reasoning (*logismos*) and produce actions. The reason that Aristotle is interested in action in *EE* II 6, then, is that he is concerned with what human activities specifically involve the use of the distinctively human rational capacities.[36] The capacity for reason, in turn, is what is ultimately responsible for the special moral status that human beings have in virtue of which they are able to achieve happiness at all, as we saw in Passage 4.

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[31] Here I follow Woods in reading the manuscript text. Walzer and Mingay read Ross's conjecture of οὐκ before ἴδια.

[32] Following Woods and the OCT in reading Dodds' conjecture of ἀνθρώπου.

[33] Following Woods and the OCT in reading Susemihl's conjecture of ὡς in place of the mss. καί.

[34] Woods' translation with minor modifications.

[35] ἀφῄρηται δὲ καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο ἐστὶ μέρος ψυχῆς, οἷον τὸ φυτικόν. ἀνθρωπίνης γὰρ ψυχῆς τὰ εἰρημένα μόρια ἴδια· διὸ οὐδ' αἱ ἀρεταὶ αἱ τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ καὶ αὐξητικοῦ ἀνθρώπου· δεῖ γὰρ, εἰ <ἀνθρώπου> ᾗ ἄνθρωπος, λογισμὸν ἐνεῖναι ὡς ἀρχὴν καὶ πρᾶξιν, ἄρχει δ' ὁ λογισμὸς οὐ λογισμοῦ ἀλλ' ὀρέξεως καὶ παθημάτων, ἀνάγκη ἄρα ταῦτ' ἔχειν τὰ μέρη. καὶ ὥσπερ ἡ εὐεξία σύγκειται ἐκ τῶν κατὰ μόριον ἀρετῶν, οὕτω καὶ ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετὴ ᾗ τέλος.

[36] Thus I disagree with Charles (2012, p. 9) who thinks that the reason that non-rational animals are not capable of action in the *EE* is that non-rational animals lack settled states of character. It may be true that non-rational animals lack settled states of character, but this is not the relevant difference in virtue of which only rational animals are capable of action.

We now know somewhat more about what being C-responsible for an action consists in, namely that it involves the use of reason. The fact, moreover, that Aristotle links the capacity for reason to humans' special moral status suggests that to understand the connection between C-responsibility and accountability, we ought to scrutinize what rational capacities are involved in human voluntary actions. We find a partial answer in *EE* II 9 where Aristotle concludes his investigation of the voluntary by defining it as what is done on the basis of thought (*kata dianoian*, 1225b1). The word that I am translating as "thought," *dianoia*, is used by Aristotle to refer to a fairly intellectually high-powered cognitive capacity, of the sort that he would not ascribe to non-rational animals.[37] Hence, I take it that in defining the voluntary in this way Aristotle means to provide an explanation of what it is about actions that distinguishes them from other kinds of behavior. This answer is only partial, however, in that it remains unclear what specifically Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of *dianoia*. I take up that question now.

4. Thought (*dianoia*)

The fact that for Aristotle non-rational animals are not capable of *dianoia* may make it tempting to understand the claim that the voluntary is what is done on the basis of thought as the claim that the voluntary is what is done on the basis of rational desire or decision (which involves rational desire). After all, elsewhere (including elsewhere in the *EE*) Aristotle describes the internal conflict from which the akratic agent suffers as one in which his thought (*dianoia*) disagrees with his appetite (*epithumia*).[38] It is perfectly clear that the antithesis between *dianoia*

[37] See, for example, *De Anima* 410b24. For this reason Kenny's (1979*)* translation of *dianoia* as "cognition" is too broad.
[38] See, for example, *EE* VII 7 1241a18-20, *De anima* III 9 433a2, *NE* VII 4, 1148a10.

and appetite there is meant to be one between a rational desire and a non-rational desire. Nonetheless, it is equally clear that this is not the right way to understand the sense of *dianoia* as it occurs in *EE* II 9. First, in the preceding discussion Aristotle considers and rejects the proposals that the voluntary is what is in accordance with decision and that the voluntary is what is in accordance with wish (*boulêsis*, rational desire) on the grounds that these definitions would imply that akratic actions are involuntary (II 7, 1223b28-II 8, 1224a4). One of the central aims of II 7 and II 8 is to show precisely that akratic actions are voluntary. I take it, then, that to understand what Aristotle has in mind when he defines the voluntary as what is done on the basis of *dianoia* we need an account of acting on the basis of *dianoia* that satisfies two conditions: (A) it must be broad enough to include cases of humans acting on non-rational desire in general and akratic action in particular; and (B) it must be narrow enough so as not to include the behavior of non-rational animals.

A natural way to begin looking for such an account would be by considering the context in II 9 within which Aristotle formulates his definition of the voluntary as what is done on the basis of thought:

> 6. [i] Since this has reached its conclusion, and the voluntary has not been marked off either by desire or by decision, it remains, therefore, to mark it off it as that which is done on the basis of thought. [ii] Well then, the voluntary is thought to be contrary to the involuntary. And acting knowing either whom or with what or that for the sake of which (οὗ ἕνεκα) one acts […] is thought to be contrary to acting on account of ignorance both of whom and with what and what, not in an incidental way. [iii] But what is done on account of ignorance, both as to what and with what and whom, is involuntary. Therefore, the contrary of that is voluntary. (1225a36-b10)

In part [i] Aristotle is alluding to a premise introduced at the very beginning of his discussion in II 7 (1223a21-26) according to which the voluntary is what is done on the basis of either: (1)

decision (*prohairesis*), (2) a specific kind of desire[39] (*orexis*); or (3) thought (*dianoia*). It has been shown to Aristotle's satisfaction in the intervening discussion that neither (1) nor (2) is right, and hence he infers (3). What is important for our present purposes, however, is that immediately after drawing this inference he goes on discuss the things that an agent must know in order to act voluntarily. For example, one must know *what* one is doing; to administer a poison voluntarily, for example, one must know that one is administering a poison. Similarly, one must know *who* one is acting on; for example, to have voluntarily struck one's father one must have known that the person one is striking is one's father, and so on. I will have somewhat more to say later on about the particular conditions that Aristotle lists. For now, the important point is that given the connection that he apparently sees between the definition of the voluntary in part [i] and the kinds of knowledge required to act voluntarily in part [ii], it is quite plausible to think that acting on the basis of thought simply involves acting with this kind of knowledge of one's circumstances.[40]

One attractive feature of this interpretation is that it provides us with an account of what *dianoia* involves that clearly satisfies condition (A) above; voluntary akratic actions involve knowledge of one's circumstances just as much as any other kind of voluntary action does. There

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[39] As opposed to desire generically construed. That Aristotle intends the premise to be understood in this way is made clear in the lines immediately after the introduction of the initial trilemma where he indicates that he takes the truth of (2) to imply that the voluntary is what is done in accordance with at most one of the three kinds of desire — appetite, spirit, or wish (1223a26-28). The reason that Aristotle does not consider the seemingly attractive alternative that the voluntary is what is done on the basis of desire generically construed seems to be that he wants to define the voluntary in terms of a single, unified capacity. The capacity for desire does not meet this criterion. There is not one capacity in the soul that is the capacity for desire, rather, there are three different capacities for a three different kinds of desire. Thus, were Aristotle to define the voluntary as what is in accordance with desire generically construed the resulting definition would be unattractively disjunctive.

[40] Hence, this is how, e.g., Englert (1987, p. 78), Heinaman (1986, p. 136), Woods (1992, pp. 135-136), Meyer (1993, p. 81), and Cooper (2013, p. 268) construe the idea.

is a worry, however, about whether this interpretation satisfies condition (B), and a more general worry about whether this account of the voluntary is consistent with what has come before. I'll start with the latter problem.

If an action counts as done on the basis of thought provided that it is done with the relevant knowledge of one's circumstances, it may seem that actions that in II 8 are classified as involuntary due to force or compulsion (*bia* or *anagkê*) will turn out to be voluntary.[41] In II 8, Aristotle is willing to grant that certain actions done under severe duress are involuntary, but it is clear that such actions may be done with the kinds of knowledge that he lists in Passage 6, and hence are plausibly understood as done on the basis of thought. This worry, I think, can be solved by attending to the qualification that Aristotle adds in part (ii) when he remarks that for an action to be involuntary due to ignorance it must be done on account of ignorance "not incidentally" (*mê kata sumbebêkos*). Aristotle goes on to make clear (1225b11-16)[42] that the reason he adds this qualification is that he wants to distinguish the case of an action that is involuntary due to ignorance from the case of actions that are done in ignorance but where the ignorance at issue is itself a downstream effect of, for example, negligence or anger.[43] In these latter cases the action is only incidentally done on account of ignorance because the root cause of the action is not ignorance but negligence or anger. The same distinction can be applied to cases of an agent acting under duress. Just as acting in ignorance does not imply that one has acted *because of* ignorance so that the action qualifies as involuntary, so too acting with knowledge of

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[41] This is noted by Meyer (1993, pp. 81-82), who thinks that the problem is an insurmountable one for the *EE* definition of the voluntary.

[42] I defend the reading that I give here at greater length elsewhere.

[43] For example, a doctor administers a medicine in ignorance of the fact that the patient is allergic to it, simply because the doctor negligently failed to consult the patient's medical records.

one's circumstances need not imply that one has acted on the basis of thought so that the action to qualifies as voluntary. An agent who performs an action involuntarily under duress may have and employ knowledge of her circumstances, and hence plausibly may be seen as in a way acting on the basis of thought, but even so, the root cause of the action will not be that cognitive activity but rather the person or thing exerting the duress. Something like this distinction is already at play in Passage 1: being causally-responsible (*aitios*) for something does not simply mean that one plays some causal role, rather it means that one is the root cause of the action.[44]

The second worry is somewhat more difficult to deal with. If acting on the basis of thought simply involves acting on the basis of knowledge of one's circumstances, it would seem that even nonhuman animals are capable of acting on the basis of thought, and hence the resulting account will not satisfy condition (B). To resolve this worry, I think we need more information about what thought involves than *EE* II 9 is able to provide. Hence, I shall set aside Passage 6 for now and take up anew the question of what *dianoia* involves. After arriving at a suitably detailed answer, I shall then return to that passage and reconsider how acting on the basis of thought relates to acting with knowledge of one's circumstances.

I would like to begin by returning one last time to Passage 1. In particular, I would like to call attention to an implicit classification of the way things come-to-be that one finds there. As we saw, Aristotle contrasts those things that one is oneself responsible for (and that hence are voluntary) with things that come about by necessity or by nature or by chance (1223a10-12).[45] This classification bears a strong resemblance to lists of ways that things come-to-be that

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[44] As I pointed out above in passing (p. 52, n. 16).

[45] Quoted again for the reader's convenience: "one is not blamed or praised on account of things belonging to one by necessity or luck or nature, but for all the ones for which we ourselves are responsible."

Aristotle provides elsewhere with one important difference: whereas in Passage 1 Aristotle includes the category of things that one is oneself responsible for, elsewhere he employs in its place the category of things that come about by thought. In the *Protrepticus*, for example, we find the following passage:

7. Of things that come-to-be, some come from some kind of thought or art (*apo tinos dianoias kai technês*), e.g. a house or a ship (for the cause of both of these is a certain art and thought) while others come-to-be through no art but by nature; for nature is the cause of animals and plants and all such things come into being on the basis of nature. But some things also come into being as a result of chance; for of most of the things that come into being neither by art nor by nature nor of necessity, we say that they come about by chance.[46] (Fr. 11 Düring)

If Aristotle is being consistent, the class of things that in Passage 1 were classed among things that we are responsible for and are voluntary Passage 7 subsumes under the heading of things that come about by thought. Passage 7, thus, seems to agree with the definition of voluntary action in *EE* II 9.[47] Similar passages are found elsewhere in the *EE,*[48] the *NE*,[49] and outside of the ethical works. In *Physics* II, for example, we find essentially the same classification. There, although the focus is on things that come-to-be by nature, we also find discussions of things that

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[46] Translation from Barnes and Lawrence in Barnes (1984) with minor modifications.

[47] See also fr. 26 where Aristotle alludes to the fact that thought (*dianoia*) is used in our actions. In context, a natural way of construing the claim would be that thought is used in all of our voluntary actions.

[48] See, for example, *EE* I 1, 1214a14-30. There Aristotle begins by discussing different candidate explanations of where happiness comes from. He identifies five main possibilities: (i) happiness comes about by nature; (ii) by teaching or from knowledge (*epistêmê*); (iii) by practice or training (*di' askêseôs tinos*); (iv) by a divine influence; or (v) by chance (1214a14-25). After enumerating these alternatives he remarks that it is obvious that happiness must be attributable to one of these causes because "practically all events come under these principles" (1214a27-28). This claim is followed by a parenthetical remark where Aristotle says "for all actions arising from thought (*dianoia*) may be classed along with acts that arise from knowledge (*epistêmê*)" (1214a29-30). The point of this parenthetical mention of *dianoia* is to indicate that the events that he earlier in that chapter attributes to knowledge fall within the broader category which he elsewhere identifies as things that come about through thought.

[49] See *NE* III 3, 1112a32-33 where Aristotle provides a similar list but employs *nous* rather than *dianoia*: "nature, necessity, and chance, and also intelligence (*nous*) and everything that comes about through man are thought to be the causes."

come-to-be by thought, by chance, and by necessity. Hence, while Aristotle says disappointingly little in the *EE* II about *dianoia*, the similarity between the use of the term there and in these other texts suggests that a potentially fruitful way of investigating what the relevant notion of thought involves would be by looking to those other discussions. And, indeed, I think that when one considers what Aristotle has to say about *dianoia* in *Physics* II, one finds the resources to make good sense of what he has in mind when he uses the same term in *EE* II.[50] Hence, I turn to *Physics* II now.

The class of things that come-to-be by thought is introduced at the beginning of *Physics* II 5 in the context of a classification of things that come-to-be for the sake of something:

8. Of things that come to be, some come to be for the sake of something, and some do not. Of the former, some are done on the basis of decision (*kata prohairesin*) and others are not, but both are in the class of things for the sake of something (*en tois heneka tou*). [...] Anything which might be done as an outcome of thought (*apo dianoias*) or nature is for the sake of something.[51] (196b17-22)

A decision, for Aristotle, is a desire that comes about as a result of deliberation about how to attain some end that one thinks to be good.[52] The reason that he mentions decision in the second sentence of this passage is that he takes action done on the basis of decision to be a paradigm case of something that comes-to-be for the sake of something and he wishes to draw attention to two further kinds of things that belong to the same class: on, the one hand, things that come-to-

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[50] Hence, I agree with Englert (1987, p. 79) who remarks that, upon finding Aristotle's definition the voluntary as what is done on the basis of thought "the reader must… be expecting, when he reaches an explanation of how the voluntary is *kata dianoian*, to find this cashed out in terms applicable only to rational beings. The reader is disappointed." Where Englert and I differ is that I think that it is possible to find such an explanation by considering remarks about *dianoia* made elsewhere in the corpus.

[51] All translations from the *Physics* are from Charlton (1995) with minor modifications.

[52] See *EE* II 10, 1227a3-5; cf. *NE* III 3, 1113a9-12, *NE* VI (=*EE* V) 2, 1139b4-5, *Magna Moralia* I 17, 1189a31-33.

be by nature are for the sake of something but, on the other hand, there are also human actions which are not done on the basis of decision but nonetheless are for the sake of something. This is why, in the final sentence, Aristotle introduces the category of things that come about on the basis of thought.[53] What actions done on the basis of decision have in common with other actions done by thought is that they have the same teleological structure. The difference is only that acting on decision requires deliberation while acting on thought does not.

The use of *dianoia* in Passage 8, then, is already illuminating. First, that passage suggests that acting on the basis of thought crucially involves acting in a goal-directed way. Second, and by that same token, it is clear that the relevant sense of *dianoia* is fairly broad. If all that is required of an action to count as done on the basis of thought is that it not be attributable to nature and that it is done for the sake of something, then it seems that most human actions done on the basis of non-rational desire will be done on the basis of thought. This implication seems to get the right result in that it satisfies condition (A).

There is a question, though, whether this conception of *dianoia* satisfies condition (B), whether it excludes cases of behavior by non-rational animals At first glance, it may seem that it does not. Nonhuman animal behavior is goal-directed just as human action is.[54] Nor is it obvious that nonhuman animal behavior is attributable to nature. When a flower rotates in response to the direction of the sun, it is intuitive enough to attribute that activity to nature. By contrast, it is not obvious that, for example, a cat's scratching the door to signal to its owner that it wants to go

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[53] That the class of actions on the basis of thought is supposed to include but extend beyond the class of actions done on the basis of decision is made clear from what Aristotle says later on in *Physics* II 5; "decision and thought have the same field; for decision is not without thought (*ouk aneu dianoias*)" (197a7-8). Cf. *Metaphysics* K 8, 1065a26-32.

[54] As Aristotle repeatedly acknowledges. See, for example, *De Anima* III 8, 432b13-17 and *De Motu* 6, 700b15-16.

outside belongs to the same category. Aristotle himself acknowledges this point in a passage later in *Physics* II. He goes on, however, to make it clear that he thinks that nonhuman animal behavior is is attributable to nature, just as much as the behavior of a plant is:

9. [That nature acts for the sake of an end] is most obvious in the animals other than man: they make things neither by art nor after inquiry or deliberation. That is why people wonder whether it is by intelligence (*vô(i)*) or by some other faculty that these creatures work — spiders, ants, and the like. By gradual advance in this direction we come to see clearly that in plants too that is produced which is conducive to the end — leaves, e.g. grow to provide shade for the fruit. If then it is both by nature and for an end that the swallow makes its nest and the spider its web, and plants grow leaves for the sake of fruit and send their roots down, not up, for the sake of nourishment, it is plain that this kind of cause is operative in things which come to be and are by nature. (II 8, 199a20-30)

The point here is that although animals engage in sometimes complex, goal-oriented activities that even resemble the activities of craftsmen in some respects, animal behavior unlike the work of craftsmen, is not attributable to thought but to nature. In denying that animals act on the basis of thought, Aristotle is not suggesting that birds, spiders, and so on are mere automata that function without the exercise of cognition at all. Nor, for that matter, is Aristotle denying that nonhuman animals sometimes perform activities that reflect fairly robust cognitive achievements. All animal self-locomotion, as Aristotle explains elsewhere, involves both cognition and desire.[55] The difference between humans and other animals is to be located in the kind of cognitive capacity that is responsible for giving rise to the desire. In *De Motu Animalium* 6, for example, we are told that whereas sometimes thought (*dianoia*) is responsible for initiating movement, in other cases imagination (*phantasia*) or sense-perception (*aisthêsis*) play the same role (700b17-18). Presumably, the reason that Aristotle in Passage 9 attributes the behavior of

[55] See, e.g., *De Anima* III 10, 433a9-21.

nonhuman animals to nature has to do with a difference between thought, on the one hand, and the kinds of cognitive capacities at work in the behavior of other animals.

What, then, is this difference meant to be? This is a large question that cannot be answered in full here. There is, however, a passage in the discussion of decision in *EE* II 10 that is particularly helpful for our purposes. The relevance of the discussion of decision should already be clear given the close connection between decision and thought that we saw in Passage 8. There, we saw that actions done on the basis of decision, like other actions done on the basis of thought, differ from animal behavior, somehow, in being for the sake of something. This same point is elaborated on in *EE* II 10:

10. So decision is not present in other animals, nor at every stage of life, nor in a human being no matter what state he is in: for neither is deliberation and a grasp of the why (*hupolêpsis tou dia ti*). […] For the deliberative part of the soul is that which observes a cause of some sort. For 'that for the sake of which' is one of the causes. For we call cause that owing to which a thing comes about; but the purpose of a thing's existence or production is what we especially call its cause, e.g. of walking, the fetching of things if this is the purpose for which one walks. (1226b21-29)

When Aristotle says that only humans are capable of grasping 'that for the sake of which' he is not denying that other animals can envision goals and act for the sake of something. He is not denying, for example, that a fox, upon detecting a rabbit in its vicinity, may envision the prospect of eating it and act accordingly, by taking chase. Rather, he is pointing out that humans, as rational animals, have the capacity to grasp goals *as* goals. Consider another example. If I take a walk to pick up some bread at the grocery store, this action in some ways seems very much analogous to the case of the fox given above. The difference that Aristotle is positing is that when I walk to the grocery store I not only envision the goal of buying bread, but I also grasp

that goal as that for the sake of which I am acting. This reading is supported by remarks that Aristotle makes in *Physics* II and elsewhere about theoretical rationality. What makes humans capable of understanding (*epistêmê*) is that humans are capable of grasping explanations and explanatory relations as such.[56] The fox, by contrast, may expect that a rabbit is present on the basis of detecting a certain smell, but this is not an instance of the fox making a genuine inference because it does not grasp the presence of the smell as *a reason* to believe that there is a rabbit around. So too, when the fox envisions the prospect of eating the rabbit and takes chase, it grasps the goal of its behavior in a way, but it does not grasp that goal *as a goal*.

Now since Passage 10 occurs within the context of Aristotle's discussion of decision, one may think that for Aristotle the capacity to take things as goals or reasons for acting is only exercised when acts on the basis of decision. One may think, for example, that one can voluntarily do something without having any grasp of the goal of that action whatsoever. I think, however, that if we return to Passage 6, we find good reason to believe that there Aristotle endorses the view that all voluntary action involves cognition of a goal and, moreover, grasping a goal as a goal.

First, notice that the list of kinds of knowledge that an agent must have in order to act voluntarily includes "that for the sake of which" (*to hou heneka*, 1225b1).[57] It is natural to read this condition as saying that all voluntary actions involve knowledge of the end for which the

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[56] See, e.g., *Physics* II 3, 194b17-19, *Posterior Analytics* I 2, 71b9-12, *Metaphysics* A 3, 983a24-25.

[57] Some commentators (e.g. Kenny (1979, p. 54) and Woods (1992, p. 136)) have thought that when Aristotle includes *to hou heneka* among the things that an agent must know in order to act voluntarily, he is using the phrase in a manner atypical for him, not to refer to the goal or *telos* of the action, but rather to refer to the outcome of the action. However, there is no textual support, in Aristotle or any other writer from the period, as far as I can tell, for a usage of this phrase in that way. It is possible, moreover, to make good sense of what Aristotle is saying if we read the condition as referring to the *telos*, as I shall go on to discuss.

agent acts. This reading finds support, moreover, in the fact that when Aristotle repeats the list of kinds of knowledge in the very same sentence (1225b7), he replaces knowledge of "that for the sake of which" with knowledge of "what [the agent is doing]."[58] It is easy to make sense of why Aristotle would treat these two interchangeably if we consider the example he provides. After explaining that one kind of knowledge that the agent must have is the knowledge of the thing on which one is acting (e.g. that the person one is acting on is one's father), Aristotle explains the further condition that the agent must grasp the end as follows: "for sometimes one sees that it is one's father but not that one is acting for killing him instead of for saving his life, as with the daughters of Pelias" (1225b3-4). In the myth to which Aristotle is referring, Jason and Medea trick Pelias' daughters into killing their father by convincing them that if they cut him up into pieces and throw those pieces into a certain pot, he would come back to life restored to youth.[59] The point Aristotle is making is that Pelias' daughters act without knowing that their action is for the sake of killing their father, and hence they kill their father involuntarily.[60] It is easy to see, however, that the very same case could be redescribed as one in which Pelias' daughter's do not know *what* they are doing: they think they are saving their father, but they are actually killing him. If this is right, then it follows straightaway from the fact that all voluntary actions involve knowing what one is doing, that all voluntary action involves knowing the end for which one acts.

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[58] Quoted again for the reader's convenience: "And acting knowing either whom or with what or that for the sake of which (οὗ ἕνεκα) one acts […] is thought to be contrary to acting on account of ignorance both of whom and with what and what, not in an incidental way."

[59] See Pausanias 8.11.2. Cf. 2.3.9 and Apollodorus 1.9.26.

[60] Notice that in this case, like the case I gave above (p. 52, n. 16), there is a clear sense in which, Pelias' daughters' actions are directed toward the end of killing their father (something which they are not aware of). There is also evidence elsewhere in Aristotle, that he thinks that some kinds of activities have natural goals, regardless of the agent's own intentions.

Of course, it is one thing to say that all cases of voluntary action involve cognition of some goal, it is another thing to say that they involve cognition of the goal *as a goal*. Hence, we can distinguish between two possible readings of the requirement that the agent act with knowledge of "that for the sake of which." On the weak reading, this condition merely requires that the agent grasp the goal of the action without requiring that the agent grasp the goal as the goal. On this reading the fox, in our example above, meets this condition since it envisions the goal of eating the rabbit. On the stronger reading, however, Aristotle means to require that the agent grasp the goal as a goal. Although the text of *EE* II 9 does not perhaps provide a decisive answer to which of these readings we should take, I think that we have very good reason to prefer the stronger reading. First, consider again the case of Pelias' daughters. It is quite natural to read the case as one in which Pelias' daughters grasp the prospect that their father will die, but simply fail to grasp that prospect as the goal for the sake of which they act. They may think that his death will be a temporary, intermediate step in the process of saving him. If we understand the example in this way, then the daughters do act with cognition of the end (their father's death) but they do not grasp the end as that for the sake of which they are acting. Hence the action will not come out as involuntary if we take the weaker reading, but it will if we take the stronger reading.

The strongest consideration in favor of the stronger reading, though, come not from what is said in *EE* II 9 itself, but from considering that chapter in the context of the discussion as a whole. If we take the stronger reading, then only rational animals will be capable of acting with all of the relevant sorts of knowledge that Aristotle lists. If this is right, then the implicit connection between acting on the basis of thought and acting with the relevant sorts of

knowledge will make good sense. Since acting on the basis of thought requires acting with knowledge of the goal as such, only humans will be capable of acting on the basis of thought. The resulting conception of action on the basis of *dianoia* will thus satisfy condition (B) above. I think it is clear that cases of akratic action will also count as done on the basis of thought and hence condition (A) will be satisfied as well. Consider an example. Suppose someone feels a desire for a beer and for that reason walks to the bar down the street to buy one, despite having resolved not to do so. While this is an akratic action, it is relevantly similar to the example provided above in which an agent takes a walk for the sake of picking up some bread. Both cases involve taking something as a goal or reason for acting, the only difference is that in the akratic case the agent acts contrary to what she thinks she ought to do. The same account applies to simpler cases of akratic action as well. Suppose, for example, that someone takes another piece of cake at a dinner party against her better judgement. In doing so, the agent is not acting on blind impulse. Rather, she has a desire — for pleasure, in this case — and perceives taking the cake as a means to satisfy that desire. If she thought that the cake would taste awful, she would

not even be akratically inclined to eat it. By contrast, the behavior of non-rational animals does not, on Aristotle's view, involve conceptualizing ends in this way.[61]

I take it, then, that what is special about action done on the basis of thought is that it is action done on the basis of taking something as a goal or reason for acting. This insight is of considerable importance for the questions that we started with. First, it tells us what is special about *action* in contrast to mere animal behavior. For Aristotle, actions have a certain teleological structure that not all goal-directed movements have. An action is something that is done for the sake of something on the basis of the agent's taking that thing as a reason for acting. This fact about action, in turn, also allows us to answer the main question we started with, namely what is it about an action's being voluntary that makes the agent accountable for it. Since acting voluntarily is a matter of acting on the basis of thought, one's voluntary actions will be those that reflect a response, good, bad, or neither, to reasons for acting. That it is this fact about voluntary actions that explains why one is accountable for them finds confirmation in a passage from II 11 which we are now in a position to appreciate.

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[61] I am suggesting, then, that on the psychological theory implicit in the *EE*, all actions done on the basis of desire in normal cases (i.e. in cases other than those discussed in the latter half of *EE* II 8) involve thought. It is worth emphasizing that I do not claim that Aristotle's mature psychological theory as found in the psychological writings and, to some extent, the *NE* also has this implication. In fact, I think there is very good reason to believe that in the *NE* Aristotle countenances the possibility that some fully-formed appetitive desires in adult humans do not require the use of thought at all (see, e.g., *NE* VII 6, 1149a34-36; cf. *De Motu* 7, 701a28-30; for discussion, see Lorenz (2006), Ch. 13, esp. pp. 196-201). But I do not think that this vitiates my thesis here. First, it would not be surprising if the *EE* and the *NE* relied on different psychological theories. The *EE* is widely held, and with good reason, philosophical and philological, to reflect an earlier stage in Aristotle's thought than that found in the *NE* and the psychological writings. Second, in the *NE* III discussion of voluntary action Aristotle does not define the voluntary as what is done on the basis of thought. This would make sense if he no longer held that all human voluntary action involves thought by the time he wrote the *NE* (so rightly Englert (1987, p. 80)). And finally, later on in the *EE*, in VIII 2, Aristotle calls reason (*logos*) the starting-point (*archê*) of change in the soul (1248a24-27). This would cohere very well with the picture I have argued for according to which all humans' self-locomotions involve thought, but it would conflict with the view in the psychological writings and the *NE*. I discuss this issue at greater length elsewhere.

After explaining that virtue affects one's decisions by making their end right (1227b12-1228a2), Aristotle goes on to explain how this relates to the topic of praise and blame: "For this reason, it is from his decisions that we judge what sort of person someone is; that is, that for the sake of which he acts, not what he does" (1228a2-4). The point that Aristotle is making here is that to know whether someone deserves praise or blame for an action one must know not only what she did, but why she did it. A vicious person, for example, may offer to help a friend move not out of a desire to help that friend, as the virtuous person would, but rather out of a desire to gain his trust in hopes of defrauding him in the future. So while both a vicious person and a virtuous person might perform the same action — helping a friend move — their actions will reflect different goals, different valuations of reasons for acting. It is this fact that explains why the one is praiseworthy and the other not.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, when Aristotle investigates voluntary action in the *Eudemian Ethics*, he is not, *pace* Meyer, simply investigating when one is causally-responsible for a certain change. Rather he is interested specifically in causal responsibility for *actions* and this fact contains the key to understanding his view. An action, as I have argued, is a movement that involves an exercise of one's capacity to treat ends as reasons for acting. When an action does reflect an exercise of one's rational capacities in this way, the action is voluntary and the agent is accountable for it. Thus, Aristotle gives the concept of action and the ability to take things as reasons for acting a central place in his explanation of accountability. This was an important development in the history of philosophy.

4.

Two conceptions of voluntariness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

1. Introduction

At the end of Chapter 2, I distinguished between two sets of questions that bear on what the relationship between voluntariness and accountability is meant to be for Aristotle. The first deals with the relative *extensions* of these two concepts (e.g., is the class of voluntary actions coextensive with the class of actions for which one is accountable and, if not, where do they come apart?). The second deals with the *explanatory* connections between voluntariness and accountability (e.g., how is the fact that an action is or is not voluntary meant to explain why the agent is or is not accountable for that action?). In dealing with the *Eudemian Ethics* I had relatively little to say about the first set of questions; in the *EE* Aristotle does seem to think that the class of voluntary actions and the class of actions for which an agent is accountable are coextensive, and at any rate the evidence to the contrary is indecisive. However, now that I turn to the *Nicomachean Ethics* the extensional questions become much more important. As I mentioned before, in the *NE*, unlike the *EE*, Aristotle explicitly identifies not two but three kinds of actions: voluntary actions, involuntary actions, and non-voluntary actions (actions that are neither voluntary nor involuntary). While he is clear, as in the *EE*, that, in the case of fully-

developed human agents, voluntariness implies that the agent is accountable and involuntariness implies that the agent is not accountable, there is a question about whether one is ever accountable for a non-voluntary action. If the answer is yes, that would have important implications for how we answer the explanatory question. If one is accountable for some actions that are not voluntary, then that implies that to answer the explanatory question we would need to find a feature that those non-voluntary actions have in common with voluntary actions in virtue of which the agent is accountable for both of them. This feature, presumably, will explain, among other things, why it is that one is typically accountable for one's voluntary actions.

Hence, I take it that a natural starting place for an investigation of the relationship between voluntariness and accountability in the *NE* is to examine the class of non-voluntary actions with an eye to whether what Aristotle says about these actions is consistent with the thesis that voluntariness is a necessary condition for accountability. Call this thesis *Voluntariness is Necessary* or *VN* for short. My aim here is to argue for a qualified rejection of VN. More specifically, I shall argue that Aristotle's remarks about non-voluntary actions show that an action can fail to meet the *NE* III 1 criteria for voluntariness while nonetheless being blameworthy. The reason I call this only a *qualified* rejection of VN is that I think there is an important distinction to be drawn between two formulations of this thesis. One formulation holds:

(A) For an agent *A* to be accountable for an action *φ*, *φ* must be voluntary.

The other holds:

(B) For *A* to be accountable for *φ*, *φ* must meet the *NE* III 1 criteria for voluntariness.

Obviously, these two formulations would be equivalent if we accept the initially plausible principle:

(C) An action *φ* is voluntary if and only if *φ* satisfies the *NE* III 1 criteria for voluntariness.

But this last principle, I shall argue, is false. It is false because Aristotle employs two distinct conceptions of voluntariness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. III 1 only contains a formulation of what I shall call the *narrow conception*. The case of non-voluntary actions shows that, according to Aristotle, one is at least sometimes accountable for actions that fail to qualify as voluntary on the narrow conception. Hence (B) is false. But Aristotle is also willing to employ a broader conception of voluntariness according to which the very same actions that III 1 classifies as non-voluntary count as voluntary. This fact implies that (C) is false: there is a way for an action to be voluntary without that action meeting the III 1 criteria. Moreover, on this broader conception of voluntariness, (A) is true: it is true that in order for an agent to be accountable for an action that action must be voluntary in the broad sense. Hence I only *qualifiedly* reject VN.

I begin, in section 2, by looking at what Aristotle says about voluntary actions in III 1. One reason that one may doubt the picture that I have proposed is that one may think that even that even in that chapter Aristotle indicates that he accepts VN. If this is right, then the account of voluntary action that he gives there would naturally be read as an account of conditions that an action must meet in order for the agent to be accountable for it. I argue, however, that III 1 does not contain an endorsement of VN. In section 3 I turn to the class of non-voluntary actions themselves and delimit two main kinds: one kind of non-voluntary action is an action done on account of ignorance (*di'agnoian*) but not regretted; the other is an action done *in* ignorance

(*agnounta*) but not *on account of ignorance*. I then turn to the question whether these actions are ever blameworthy and, in section 4, I argue that III 5 provides strong evidence for thinking that actions of both types are. III 5 also raises a puzzle, though, because it also seems to imply that the very actions that III 1 classifies as non-voluntary are in fact voluntary. In section 5 I argue that the best way of solving this apparent contradiction is by understanding Aristotle to be using "voluntary" in a broader sense in III 5 than in III 1.

2. Voluntariness and accountability: *NE* III 1, 1109b30-35

The *NE* account of voluntary action provides much less by way of preface than the *EE* account does. In the *NE* we have only a couple sentences in which Aristotle connects the question of when an action is voluntary to the question of when it is appropriate to praise or blame someone for an action. These remarks occur at the very beginning of III 1, in a passage that reads as follows:

> 1. Virtue, then, is has to do with feelings and actions. These [feelings and actions] receive praise or blame if they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, if they are involuntary. Hence, presumably, in examining virtue we must define the voluntary and the involuntary. This is also useful to legislators, both for honors and corrective treatments.[1] (1109b30-35)

This passage is sometimes taken to show that by delimiting the conditions under which an action is voluntary Aristotle means to delimit the conditions under which an agent is accountable for an action. If true, this would in a way, be perfectly consistent with the picture that I shall argue for. After all, as I said, I *do* think that there is a version of VN that is true. But if we understand his comments in this way, their location does seem to pose a challenge for my view. The fact that

[1] All translations from the *NE* will be from Irwin (1999) with minor modifications unless otherwise noted.

these remarks occur in III 1 suggests that even in that chapter his delimitation of the voluntary is meant at the same time to delimit the class of actions that one is accountable for. But this is precisely what I want to deny.

I think, however, that, on consideration, Aristotle's comments in Passage 1 do not threaten the picture that I shall propose. First, there is a question about how much Aristotle means to say in that passage. If we read the passage as an endorsement of VN, we must take this passage to be a report of Aristotle's considered view of the relationship between voluntariness and accountability. This is not, however, the most plausible way of reading the passage. Notice that when Aristotle says that actions "receive praise or blame if they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, if they are involuntary" (1109b31-32) he is quite clearly merely reporting a fact about actual practice. He gives no indication that he thinks these practices are justified. This suggests that in this passage he is merely following the familiar Aristotelian procedure of beginning an investigation by considering commonly held or otherwise reputable opinions, before launching his own investigation which will likely confirm some such opinions and disconfirm others. It seems, then, we should not put too much weight on these remarks.

Of course, part of the reason many have read Passage 1 as expressing Aristotle's own view is that his remarks there do cohere quite well with what he has to say later on in the chapter where he is unambiguously speaking *in propria persona*. He does seem to assume (i) that when a normal adult agent acts voluntarily, she is accountable for her action. He also seems to assume (ii) that when an action is involuntary, the agent is not accountable for her action. This agrees with Aristotle's remarks in Passage 1 and since he never explicitly tries to justify these

assumptions, it is natural to take that passage as simply stating an assumption that he will take for granted.

I grant that Aristotle does assume both (i) and (ii). As Aristotle himself points out later in the chapter, though, the voluntary-involuntary distinction is not exhaustive: there are also actions which are neither voluntary nor voluntary, actions which he calls *ouch hekousion*, non-voluntary. To find VN in III 1 we would need not only (i) and (ii), but also the further claim that one is never accountable for a non-voluntary action. Does Passage 1 contain this claim? It does not appear to. Although that passage does affirm both (i) and (ii) it says nothing about actions which are neither voluntary nor involuntary.

It is possible, however, to take Aristotle in Passage 1 to be employing "involuntary" in a broader sense than he does later on in the chapter, such as to include both non-voluntary actions and involuntary actions proper. This reading has some plausibility. After all, Aristotle has not yet distinguished between actions which are involuntary strictly speaking and those that are simply

non-voluntary.[2] But if this is the right way to understand Aristotle's language, and if Passage 1 contains a statement of his own view, then we ought to expect what he says about involuntary actions in that passage to apply also to non-voluntary actions. We ought to expect, that is, that Aristotle thinks that one is not accountable for one's non-voluntary actions. To see whether this is true, though, we need to consider what he actually says about non-voluntary actions.

I take it, then, that Passage 1 does not give us good reason for thinking that III 1 endorses VN. On the one hand, it is not obvious whether Aristotle is endorsing a view there or merely reporting one. And, on the other hand, even if one reads him as endorsing a view, it is unclear what view precisely he means to endorse. If he is using "involuntary" *sensu stricto*, then he is not asserting VN. By contrast the plausibility of the view that he is speaking more loosely, but still means to endorse VN, depends on whether what he goes on to say in fact confirms that one is not accountable for one's non-voluntary actions. Hence, however we read the passage, we need to

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[2] A suggestion made by C.C.W. Taylor (2006) seems to give further credibility to this interpretation. After discussing cases of action that are involuntary because they are done by force and actions that are involuntary because they were done on account of ignorance of the agent's circumstances, Aristotle adds a further condition that an action must meet to count as involuntary, namely that it must be regretted by the agent (1110b18-24, discussed below). Taylor suggests that this means that actions done by force and actions done on account of ignorance of the agent's circumstances are not, strictly speaking, species of involuntary action, but rather non-voluntary action. A forced action that is not regretted would be non-voluntary and not involuntary. Aristotle does of course clearly say that forced actions and actions done on the basis of the relevant sort of ignorance are involuntary. Hence, if Taylor is right, Aristotle's use of 'involuntary' would need to be construed loosely, in the same way as one might construe his use of the term in Passage 1. I do not think, however, that Taylor is right that Aristotle needs to be read in this way. When Aristotle says that forced actions have their origin external to the agent, he could be read as merely stating a necessary condition for an action to be forced. If this is right, then the regret-criterion does not threaten the idea that forced actions are involuntary in the strict sense. For perhaps an additional criterion for an action to count as forced is that it be regretted by the agent afterward. Some additional support for this view is found in the EE where Aristotle defines forced actions as those whose moving principle is both external to the agent and contrary to the agent's own impulse (II 8, 1224b7-8). This latter condition, absent in the *NE*, is perhaps meant to be covered by Aristotle's inclusion of the regret criterion (which, notably, is absent in the *EE*). Similarly, when Aristotle describes certain actions as involuntary because they were done on account of ignorance of the agent's circumstances, he could be simply stating a necessary condition for these actions to be involuntary, while intending to flesh out the relevant class of actions more fully in the rest of the chapter.

consider what he says about non-voluntary actions to judge whether Aristotle endorses VN. I turn to that topic now and I argue that in fact one is accountable for some of one's non-voluntary actions, and, hence, VN is not accepted in III 1.

3. Non-voluntary actions: *NE* III 1, 1110b18-30

As I turn to the class of actions that Aristotle classifies as non-voluntary, the first task is to get a grasp on what actions fit this description. I shall argue that there are two kinds of actions that are non-voluntary: (i) actions that are done on account of ignorance but not regretted and (ii) actions that are done *in* ignorance but not *on account of* ignorance.

Let us begin by looking at the key text. I shall divide it into two parts corresponding to the two kinds of actions that I think it classifies as non-voluntary:

2. [i] Everything done on account of ignorance (*di' agnoian*) is not voluntary, but what is involuntary also involves pain and regret. For if someone's action was done on account of ignorance, but he now has no objection to the action, he has done it neither voluntarily, since he did not know what it was, nor involuntarily, since he now feels no pain. Hence, among those who act on account of ignorance, the agent who now regrets his action seems to act involuntarily, but the agent with no regrets may be called non-voluntary (*ouch hekousion*) — for, since he is different, it is better if he has his own special name.

   [ii] Further, action caused by ignorance would seem to be different from action done in ignorance. For if the agent is drunk or angry his action seems to be caused by drunkenness or anger, not by ignorance, though it is done in ignorance, not in knowledge. (1110b18-27)

One of the main challenges involved in interpreting this text is to get clear on what the relationship between the two parts of this passage is meant to be. How does the distinction in part (ii) relate to what is said in part (i)? My answer is that by calling attention to the case of action done *in* but not *on account of* ignorance, Aristotle means to call attention to another way in

which an action can be non-voluntary (i.e. in addition to the way spelled out in part (i)). This reading stands opposed to two popular readings, both of which are worth discussing. Seeing why these readings are unsatisfactory will at the same time show why my reading is preferable.

According to the first reading — call it R1 — the distinction between the two classes of actions in part (ii) is equivalent to the distinction in part (i) between two kinds of actions done in ignorance — those that are regretted and those that are not. An action that is done in ignorance but not regretted is an action that is done *in* but not *on account of* ignorance. This is the only kind of non-voluntary action. The principal proponents of this view with whom I shall be concerned are Mårten Ringbom (1965) and Jon Moline (1989). According to the second — call it R2 — the distinction in part (ii) is equivalent to the distinction that Aristotle goes on to draw between actions done on account of ignorance of the universal and actions done on account of ignorance of the particular (1110b30-1111a2, quoted below). Actions done in ignorance of the universal correspond to the class of actions done merely *in* ignorance, whereas actions done in ignorance of the particular correspond to actions done *on account of* ignorance. Since Aristotle is clear that actions done in ignorance of the universal are in fact voluntary, this reading would imply that part (ii) does not describe a case of non-voluntary action. This view has been held by a great many commentators going back to the Anonymous Paraphrast; we might even call it the traditional reading.[3] Let me begin by discussing R1.

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According to R1 the kinds of actions that Aristotle has in mind when he speaks in part (i) of actions that are involuntary because they are not regretted are actions performed *in* ignorance

[3] Other proponents of this reading include Brewer (1836, p. 90), Grant (1866, Vol. 2, p. 11), Ramsauer (1878, p. 139), Stewart (1892, pp. 234-235), and Daube (1969, pp. 134-139).

(i.e., *while* the agent is ignorant), but the ignorance at issue plays no causal role in bringing the action about. An example may be as follows. Heidi buys a garment that was made in Canada. She did not check the tag before buying it and hence she bought it in ignorance of that fact that it was made in Canada. This ignorance, however, is not *why* she bought the garment. Even if she had known where it was made, that would not have affected her purchasing decision. In this case it is plausible to say that Heidi unintentionally bought a Canadian made garment. And since we stipulated that Heidi does not care about the garment's place of manufacture we can imagine that when she looks at the tag and realizes that she bought a Canadian-made garment, she does not feel regret.

It is easy to see why Aristotle wants to distinguish actions like this from involuntary actions. To say in Greek that someone did something *akôn* is, in part, to suggest that that person was in some way actively opposed to the action in question.[4] Since this is not true of Heidi in my example, it makes sense that Aristotle would not want to categorize actions like this as involuntary. It is also easy to see how the distinction would relate to the distinction in part (ii) between acting merely *in* ignorance and acting *on account of* ignorance. Heidi clearly was ignorant that she was buying a Canadian-made garment when she acted and hence there is an obvious sense in which she acted *in* ignorance, but, by stipulation, that ignorance was causally irrelevant and hence it is clear that we would not want to describe this as a case of her acting *on account of* ignorance.

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[4] Cf. Gauthier and Jolif (1970) *ad loc*.: "Faire quelque chose ἄκων pour un Grec, ce n'est pas seulement ... «ne pas le faire exprès», c'est le faire «malgré soi», «à contre-cœur»; cela implique chez le sujet une répugnance positive pour l'acte qu'il accomplit ainsi."

The problem with this reading is that Aristotle very explicitly describes the non-voluntary actions at issue in part (i) as done *on account of* ignorance (*di'agnoian*, 1110b18, 19, 22). This consideration, although perhaps not decisive,[5] gives us a strong reason to prefer an interpretation according to which the actions at issue genuinely are done on account of ignorance. The reason that Moline nonetheless accepts R1 is that he thinks that no such cases are possible. "Lack of remorse," he writes, "is sufficient to show that the agent did not act or react through or because of ignorance of circumstances, for even if she had not been ignorant, she might well have done the same thing" (p. 291). Mårten Ringbom (1965), who Moline cites approvingly (p. 291 n. 20) holds the same view. According to Ringbom, if an agent does not regret some action that he did in ignorance, then it must be "an act of which the agent approves and which he would have chosen, even if he had had sufficient information about it" (p. 88).

Ringbom and Moline, however, are wrong to rule out the possibility that an action can be *both* done on account of ignorance *and* not regretted later by the agent. It is easy to think of examples that fit this description. Suppose, for example, that Ingrid gets on a bus and while doing so, unwittingly steps on another passenger's foot. Suppose further that this was not something she intended to do and that if she had realized what she was doing, she wouldn't have done it (she doesn't make a point of stepping on strangers' feet). Once she realizes that she's stepped on someone's foot, though, she may very well be perfectly indifferent and unapologetic. Cases like this are not only possible, but quite frequently actual. Another case could be as follows. Suppose Yngve buys a stereo at a particular store, unaware that the very same model is

[5] I say that it is not decisive because one might think, for example, that Aristotle is using the phrase "on account of ignorance" in a looser sense than that in which he uses it later on, after distinguishing between acting on account of ignorance and acting merely in ignorance.

available at a slightly lower price at a store a few doors down. We may suppose that if Yngve had known that he could have bought the stereo for less there, he would have done so. Hence his action was done in part on account of ignorance of what he was doing. He thought he was buying the stereo at the lowest available price, but that was in fact false. If the difference is only very small, though, and Yngve has plenty of money, he may not particularly care that he could have bought it for cheaper once he finds out. And hence he may not be pained by the realization that he missed a slightly better deal.[6]

The fact that, *pace* Moline and Ringbom, it is possible to make sense of the idea that someone may act on account of ignorance while nonetheless not regretting it afterward suggests that we ought to take Aristotle at his word when he describes the cases at issue in part (i) as cases in which an agent acts on account of ignorance. And, if we understand part (ii) as describing cases of non-voluntary action also, as R1 does, we are left with the result that there are two kinds of non-voluntary actions: some are done on account of ignorance, others are merely done in ignorance.

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But whereas R1 understands cases of actions done merely *in* ignorance as cases where the ignorance plays no causal role, this interpretation is doubted by proponents of R2. According to R2, the distinction between actions done *on account of* ignorance and actions done merely *in* ignorance has not to do with whether the ignorance *caused* the action to come about or not, but rather with the *kind* of ignorance that caused the action. Proponents of this view arrive at this

[6] The opposing case of a genuinely involuntary action, then, would be one where the difference in price is high or Yngve is more concerned with saving money, in which case he would feel pain upon realizing what he has done

conclusion by reading the distinction in part (ii) in terms of the distinction that Aristotle draws in the lines immediately after between two different kinds of ignorance that may cause someone to act a certain way. The lines in question read as follows:

2. [iii] Certainly (*men oun*) every vicious person is ignorant of the actions he must do or avoid, and this sort of error makes people unjust, and in general bad. This ignorance of what is beneficial is not taken to make an action involuntary. […] It is not, in other words, ignorance of the universal, for we are blamed *because* of that. Rather the cause is ignorance of the particulars in which the action consists and is concerned with. In these cases there is pity and pardon. (1110b30-1111a2)

Now one reason one may think that this passage is meant to be an elucidation of the distinction in part (ii) is because of the way that Aristotle introduces it, with the particle *men oun*. This particle usually has inferential force and this would lead one to expect that this distinction is meant somehow to follow from what came before.[7] The particle does not *always* have this meaning, though, and hence I think this consideration is far from conclusive.[8] The question, then, is whether the distinction in part (iii) provides the best available way of making sense of the distinction in part (ii). To evaluate this question, we need first to consider what the distinction at issue in part (iii) is meant to be.

I shall return to this passage in the next chapter at which point I shall discuss in greater detail the way in which Aristotle sets up this distinction (for example, what he means when he uses the language of the universal and the particular). For now, however, it is enough to observe that Aristotle means to make the point that although actions done in ignorance of normative facts

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[7] A point made by Meyer (1993, pp. 177-178), although she concludes, on balance, that this is not the right way of understanding the passage.

[8] For example, Aristotle sometimes uses μὲν οὖν to to introduce a new topic (see Bonitz (1870) s.v. μέν which cites *Politics* 1460a11 and *HA* 608b19) or to provide emphatic force (see Bonitz (*ibid*.), which cites *Politics* 1399a15, 23). Both readings are plausible in this context.

— for example, the fact that it is wrong to steal or that two bottles of wine is too much for one person to drink at a dinner party — are done on account of ignorance in a way, the ignorance at issue is not the sort that either excuses or makes an action involuntary. If these actions are meant to correspond to the actions done *in* but not *on account of* ignorance, then that would imply that the latter sort of actions are not meant to be a further case of non-voluntary action at all. Such actions would be voluntary.

This reading does seem to offer a plausible way of making sense of the examples that Aristotle gives in part (ii) of actions done *in* but not *on account of* ignorance. On this reading what Aristotle is calling attention to in part (ii) is the way in which conditions like drunkenness and anger can have pernicious effects on one's behavior by affecting the one's normative outlook or, equivalently, causing one to make certain false normative judgments. Drunkenness, for example, diminishes one's inhibitions. This can affect one's normative judgments. For example, someone who is drunk may judge it appropriate to try to seduce a married colleague, while, if she were sober, she would know that this kind of behavior is wrong. Anger has a similar cognitive effect. If someone is extremely angry because, say, she has just been cut off in traffic, she might judge that some form of violent retaliation is called for. Were she not so angry, though, she would probably realize that retaliating is not a good idea.

There is, however, textual evidence for thinking that this interpretation cannot be right. As Meyer (1993, pp. 177-178) points out, the same distinction at issue in part (ii) is found elsewhere in the *NE*, and what Aristotle says there speaks against this reading. In V 8 Aristotle again mentions the category of actions that are done in ignorance but not on account of ignorance, but explicitly says that these actions are *in*voluntary (1136a5-9). It is easy to reconcile

this with the claim that they are *non*-voluntary — we can simply take him to be speaking somewhat more loosely in V 8 than he is in III 1 (this makes sense given that V 8 is concerned with the practical matter of categorizing different kinds of torts). It is not easy, however to reconcile this with the reading according to which such actions are voluntary.

This gives us some reason to prefer an alternative interpretation. What such an interpretation could be like is suggested by remarks that Aristotle makes in III 5 where he explains that an agent can even be blameworthy for ignorance if that ignorance is caused by some other activity for which the agent is culpable. He mentions explicitly the example of drunken ignorance in this connection (1113b30-33). With these remarks Aristotle is implicitly drawing a distinction between one sort of culpable ignorance and one sort of ignorance that is non-culpable. The culpable ignorance at issue, though, is not culpable simply because of its content (like the ignorance of the universal alluded to in part (iii)). Rather, the reason this ignorance is culpable has to do with its causal history — the way in which the ignorance came about. This suggests that in the case of two agents who share the same false belief, one may be culpable and the other not if the one is culpable for becoming ignorant and the other is not.

This distinction from III 5 is a very good candidate for how we ought to interpret the distinction in part (ii). Recall Aristotle's remark there that "if the agent is drunk or angry his action seems to be caused by drunkenness or anger, not by ignorance, though it is done in ignorance, not in knowledge" (1110b24-27). What Aristotle seems to be getting at is that in the cases of drunken or angry ignorance that he has in mind the reason that the resulting action does not count as done on account of ignorance has to do with the causal role that drunkenness or anger plays. It is because the agent is drunk that he is ignorant and hence the ignorance itself is

merely an incidental cause of the action and not the true source.[9] This suggests that both R1 and R2 get the distinction at issue in part (ii) wrong. Contrary to R1, Aristotle does not have in mind cases where the ignorance plays no causal role, rather these are cases where the ignorance simply fails to play the right kind of causal role. Contrary to R2, Aristotle is not committed to thinking that the ignorance at issue must be evaluative.

What, then, would be an example of a case in which someone acts *in* but *not on account of* ignorance? Suppose Espen comes back to his apartment building after a long night of drinking, but because he is heavily inebriated he mistakes his neighbor's apartment, which happens to be unlocked, for his own and as a result he ends up entering the wrong residence. Now, in this case Espen is ignorant of the fact that the apartment he was entering was not his own. And, moreover, if he had known that it wasn't his apartment he would not have entered it. So, clearly, his ignorance is not causally irrelevant as it was in the case of Heidi's ignorance of her garment's country of manufacture. Nonetheless, his ignorance was only a downstream effect of his drunkenness, so to attribute the action merely to ignorance is to mistake a mere effect for the cause.

The question that remains is whether actions like this are non-voluntary, and I think the answer is clearly yes. That these actions cannot be voluntary is clear from what Aristotle says in part (i) where he states that for an action to be voluntary they must be done with the relevant particular knowledge. This condition is not satisfied in the cases at issue in part (ii) as I have described them. That they are not *in*voluntary either is clear from what is said in part (iii), namely that ignorance only makes an action involuntary when the action is done on account of

[9] Cf. the claim in *EE* II 9 that in order for an action to be involuntary due to ignorance it must be done on account of ignorance "not incidentally" (*mê kata sumbebêkos*, 1225b11-16) discussed above.

ignorance. Hence I conclude that part (ii), like part (i) describes a kind of non-voluntary action, but a different kind than in part (i). Call the actions at issue in part (i) — i.e., actions done on account of ignorance but not regretted — *Type 1* cases of non-voluntary actions. And call the actions at issue in part (ii) *Type 2* cases. The question now is whether these two types of action are ever blameworthy. I argue that they are, beginning with actions of Type 2.

4. Are non-voluntary actions blameworthy?

I have already alluded to a passage in III 5 that suggests that some actions done in drunken ignorance are blameworthy. I shall now consider that question in more detail and argue that they are. I begin by situating the passage in context.

Whereas III 1 is primarily about the question of when an *action* is voluntary, III 5 is primarily about the question of when a *state of character* is voluntary. One of Aristotle's concerns, more specifically, is to show that virtue and vice are "up to us" (*eph hêmin*), contra the Asymmetry Thesis. One of the arguments that Aristotle gives for this adverts approvingly to existing legislative practices. If vice were not up to us it would be absurd for legislators to impose corrective treatments for it. But legislators do impose such treatments and, moreover, these treatments are sometimes effective, which indicates that vice is in a way up to us and voluntary (1113b21-30). He goes on to point out that "legislators also impose corrective treatments for one's ignorance itself, if the agent seems to be responsible for the ignorance" (1113b30-31). The cases he has in mind are clearly the same as those he adverted to in part (ii) of Passage 2:

3. A drunk, for instance, pays a double penalty; for the starting-point is in him, since he controls (*kurios*) whether he gets drunk, and his getting drunk causes his ignorance. They [sc. legislators] also impose corrective treatment on someone who [does a vicious action] in ignorance of some provision of the law that he is required to know and that it is not hard [to know]. And they impose it in other cases likewise for any other ignorance that seems to be caused by the agent's inattention; they assume it is up to him not to be ignorant, since he controls whether he pays attention. (1113b31-1114a3)

Now, Aristotle's language here may seem to suggest that he is dealing with a slightly different question than the one I am currently concerned with. He seems to be addressing not whether the *action* that is done by the drunkenly ignorant agent is blameworthy, but rather whether the *ignorance* of the agent is itself blameworthy. This leaves it open, for example, that Aristotle holds the view that when someone does something harmful on account of drunken ignorance, he is not blameworthy for the action itself, but rather the ignorance that caused it. On consideration, however, I think this view is not plausible. First, it is highly implausible to believe that when Aristotle alludes approvingly to existing legislative practice, he is referring to the practice of punishing people *simply for being ignorant* of certain things. Presumably what the practices he is referring to involve is punishing people for actions done on the basis of culpable ignorance. This suggests that when Aristotle speaks of blaming someone for ignorance, he is speaking somewhat loosely and he has in mind blame for things done on account of ignorance.[10] Second, as Klimchuck (2003, p. 229) points out, the fact that Aristotle refers to the legislators doubling the punishments suggests that there are two things the agent is being punished for — presumably, the action and the ignorance that caused it. And, finally, the story that Aristotle provides to explain why the agent is culpable in these cases also has the implication that the agent is culpable for the

[10] Aristotle may still believe that ignorance in these cases is itself blameworthy. My point is simply that, in context, it is implausible to take Aristotle to only be talking about those kinds of actions.

action done in ignorance and not merely the ignorance itself. The reason one is accountable for one's ignorance is that one is in *control* of that ignorance in a way. And the reason one is in control of the ignorance is that one is in control of the activity that foreseeably[11] produced it (e.g., getting drunk).[12] If this is true, then it follows that one is also accountable for one's actions done in ignorance. These actions may be caused by ignorance in a way but they are also under the control of the agent in a way since the ignorance is under the control of the agent.

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Aristotle is even clearer that he thinks that Type 1 non-voluntary actions are blameworthy. Shortly after Passage 4 Aristotle goes on to address the case of someone who is ignorant due to negligence or indifference (*ameleia*): "And [legislators] impose a [corrective treatments] in other cases likewise for any other ignorance that seems to be caused by the agent's negligence. They assume it is up to him not to be ignorant, since he controls (*kurios*) whether he pays attention" (1114a1-3). I think it is clear that the explanation that Aristotle gives here for why actions done on account of *ameleia* are blameworthy, also implies that some non-voluntary actions of Type 1 are blameworthy. Suppose, for example, that Olav is on a hunting expedition and illegally kills an animal belonging to an endangered species. Suppose further that Olav did not know that the animal belonged to that species, but this ignorance is itself a product of Olav's negligent failure to properly prepare for his hunting expedition. Now there are two possibilities

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[11] Aristotle is less than perfectly clear in Passage 3 that he means to restrict culpability to the foreseeable consequences of our actions, but there is nonetheless good reason to read that passage in this way. The foreseeable-unforeseeable distinction is explicitly appealed to in V 8 (1135b16-19) and implicitly shortly later on in III 5 in a passage that I shall discuss in the next chapter (1114a9-13). I discuss this issue somewhat more below (p. 99, n. 14).

[12] In the case of angry ignorance the way in which one is responsible for the ignorance is somewhat more complicated and a full account will have to wait until the next chapter (see section 4). In short, though, the reason that one is responsible for the ignorance is that the ignorance is caused by one's condition of character which, in turn, one is oneself responsible for.

as to how Levi may react once he finds out what he has done. He may feel regret or he may not. In the latter case, his action will count as a Type 1 non-voluntary action. In the former case, it would be a Type 2 non-voluntary action. But what Aristotle says in the passage just quoted implies that in either case Olav is still culpable. Indeed, it would be quite odd if the fact that Olav did not feel regret afterward made him *less* culpable for his action. And what Aristotle goes on to say seems to confirm this point. Negligence or, we might add, lack of regret, itself may reflect a bad condition of character which Aristotle thinks the agent is himself usually responsible for. I will discuss in greater detail how this picture is meant to work in the next chapter. For now, though, I think that we now have very strong reason for thinking that the both kinds of actions that III 1 classifies as non-voluntary are sometimes blameworthy.

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Here a difficulty arises. The reason, as we saw, that these actions are blameworthy is, in part, that they are up to us in a way insofar as they originate in things that are up to us (for example, the act of getting drunk). In one passage in III 5, however, Aristotle says that everything that is up to us is voluntary: "But if what we have said appears true, and we cannot refer back to other principles apart from those that are up to us, those things that have their principles in us are themselves up to us and voluntary" (1113b19-21). The idea that we seem to find here is that anything that originates in something that is up to the agent is itself voluntary. This clearly implies that actions done in culpable ignorance are voluntary. Hence, there is an apparent conflict between III 5 and III 1, which, as we saw, categorizes actions like this as non-voluntary.

What are we to make of this apparent inconsistency? The solution that I shall argue for is to posit two different conceptions of voluntariness in the *NE*. On the narrow conception, an action's being voluntary must meet the criteria set out in III 1, while on the broader conception at work in III 5, a sufficient condition for an action to be voluntary is for it to originate in the agent's own behavior in a certain way.

5. Two conceptions of voluntariness

In arguing for the distinction between these two ways in which something can be voluntary, I shall rely on two main passages. The first is from the end of III 5 (1114b30-1115a3 = Passage 4 below). There Aristotle distinguishes between the way in which a state of character is voluntary and the way in which an action is voluntary: a state of character is voluntary by virtue of being *indirectly* under our control, whereas an action is voluntary when it is *directly* under our control. This passage shows that Aristotle does employ two distinct conceptions of voluntariness, along the lines that I have suggested. There is a question, though, as to whether the broader conception can be applied to actions as well as to character states. Hence, I go on to discuss a passage from III 12 (1119a21-33 = Passage 5 below) that shows that Aristotle does employ the broader notion in relation to actions.

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Toward the end of III 5 Aristotle argues, against the Asymmetry Thesis,[13] that both virtue and vice are voluntary, by which he seems to mean that virtuous and vicious *character states* are

[13] The Asymmetry Thesis, recall, is the view that while virtue or virtuous actions are voluntary, vice or vicious actions are involuntary.

voluntary. He goes on to point out that the way in which a character state is voluntary differs from the way in which an action is voluntary:

4. Actions and states, however, are not voluntary in the same way. For we are in control of actions from the beginning to the end, when we know the particulars. With states, however, we are in control of the beginning, but what the cumulative effect (*prosthesis*) of particular actions will be is not clear (*ou gnôrimos*),[14] any more than with sicknesses. Nonetheless, since it was up to us to exercise a capacity either this way or another way, states are voluntary. (1114b30-1115a3)

The point Aristotle is making here is that although both voluntary actions and voluntary character states count as voluntary by virtue of the fact that the agent is in control of them, there are more and less direct ways of being in control of something. In the case of an action, one is in control of the whole thing *directly* by virtue of being in control of the movements in which the action consists. In the case of a voluntary character state, one is in control of that state in an *indirect* way, by virtue of being in control of certain actions that produced it. There may be less control available to the agent over his character state once he has acquired it, but it still counts as under his control in the relevant way because it originated in actions that he himself voluntarily performed.

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[14] Here my translation differs importantly from Irwin's. The Greek here reads: καθ᾽ἕκαστα δὲ ἡ πρόσθεσις οὐ γνώριμος. Irwin translates this as "but we do not know what the cumulative effects of the particular actions will be." This translation seems to me to be too strong. It implies that whenever a state is the effect of one's actions regardless of whether that state was a foreseeable effect, the state is voluntary. But this seems to be both wrong, and at odds with what Aristotle himself says. Earlier in III 5, as we saw, Aristotle implies that the reason that one is accountable for one's states of character is that they are the *foreseeable* effect of one's actions (1114a9-10, discussed below) and in V 8 he distinguishes between two kinds of injuries done in ignorance. Those that are contrary to reasonable expectation (*paralogôs*) are simply misfortunes (atuchêmata). A solution to this problem is suggested by one of Aristotle's usages of γνώριμος cited by Bonitz (1870, s.v. γνώριμος) according to which the term is synonymous with δῆλον and σάφες (Bonitz finds this usage at 76b17, 19, and 21, a29b3, and 159b8). If we construe the term this way in the above passage, Aristotle is saying that even when the effect of the actions is not immediately manifest, the effect can still be voluntary. The effect may fail to be clear in this sense, while still being foreseeable.

Passage 4, then, constitutes very strong evidence for the reading I have proposed. For there Aristotle draws precisely the distinction that I wish to draw between one way of being voluntary by being under the agent's *direct* control and another way of being voluntary by being under the agent's control in an indirect way. There is one important difference between what Aristotle has to say in Passage 4 and the view that I wish to attribute to him, however, namely that in Passage 4 the items being contrasted are actions on the one hand and character states on the other, whereas I am suggesting that the very same distinction can be applied to two cases of action: the drunkenly-ignorant agent's action is voluntary in the indirect way, but not voluntary in the direct way. This may seem to conflict with Aristotle's statement in Passage 4 that an action is voluntary when "we are in control of actions from the beginning to the end, when we know the particulars." This remark is naturally read as stating a necessary and sufficient condition for an action to be voluntary: an action is voluntary if only if the action is under the control of the agent from beginning to end. If Aristotle accepts this biconditional, then he could not accept that an action can be voluntary in the way that a character state is, by being under the *indirect* control of the agent.

I think think, however, that there is very good reason to deny that Passage 4 commits Aristotle to this biconditional. When Aristotle says there that states of character are voluntary by being indirectly under the agent's control, he is restating the conclusion of an argument he made earlier (1114a7-29). And in the course of that earlier argument he gives an example of an action which is voluntary but which is not under the control of the agent from start to finish (1114a17-19). If someone throws a stone, the agent cannot stop the stone's movement once it is mid-air. The fact that the agent does not have complete control over the action in this way,

however, does not imply that throwing the stone was not voluntary or that it was not up to the agent. What makes the action voluntary is that the agent controls the first part of the action, or, as Aristotle puts it, the origin of the action is in the agent (1114a19).

The stone-throwing case shows that it is false that the only way that an action can be voluntary is by being under the agent's control from start to finish. This suggests that when Aristotle in Passage 4 draws the distinction between voluntariness in the case of actions and in the case of character states, he ought to be understood to be speaking somewhat loosely: *paradigm cases* of voluntary action are under the control of the agent from start to finish, whereas voluntary states of character are not like this. This distinction does not preclude the possibility that *some* voluntary actions are in part outside of the agent's control. I take it, then, that Passage 4 is not meant to preclude the possibility that some actions are voluntary in the same, indirect way that states are. This, in turn, leaves open the possibility that the broad conception of voluntariness applies to actions as well. That Aristotle does in fact apply the broad conception of voluntariness to actions is shown decisively, I think, by a passage in *NE* III 12, which I turn to now.

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First, some context. After concluding his discussion of voluntariness and related topics in III 1-5, Aristotle begins discussing each of the particular virtues and their contraries, first discussing courage and cowardice in III 6-9, and then discussing temperance and self-indulgence in III 10-12. It is clear that his discussions of the particular virtues is meant in part as a continuation of the discussion of III 5. III 5 argued that virtues and vices are both up to us and voluntary, and one of Aristotle's aims in discussing the particular virtues is to provide further

evidence for thinking this. That this is one of Aristotle's aims is seen, for example, in III 12, where he concludes his discussion of temperance and self-indulgence by considering whether self-indulgence or cowardice is more voluntary.

5. [i] Self-indulgence seems more voluntary than cowardice; for it is caused by pleasure, which is choiceworthy, whereas cowardice is caused by pain, which is worthy of aversion. Moreover, pain disturbs and ruins the nature of the sufferer, while pleasure does nothing of the sort; self-indulgence, then, is more voluntary. That is why it is also more open to reproach.

[ii] For it is also easier to acquire the habit of facing pleasant things since our life includes many of them and we can acquire the habit with no danger; but with frightening things the reverse is true. (1119a21-27)

The idea that one thing can be *more* voluntary than another has not yet been made explicit.[15] Nonetheless, it is fairly easy to make sense of in light of what we saw in III 5. There the explanation for why one is accountable for, say, certain bad bodily conditions was that these are under the agent's control in a way. But it stands to reason that some such conditions can be under the agent's control more than others.[16] This seems to be precisely the point that Aristotle is making here. In book II Aristotle argued that one acquires virtues through practice — i.e., by behaving like a virtuous person would act. An implication of this is that if one is never in the circumstances necessary to practicing the behaviors associated with a given virtue, one will not be able to acquire that virtue. In part (ii) of this passage Aristotle is applying this implication to the case of self-indulgence and cowardice. Aristotle conceives of the objects of courage

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[15] It is, perhaps, *implicit* in Aristotle's remark in III 1 that mixed-actions are "more (μᾶλλον) voluntary" than involuntary (1110a12). But it is unclear whether μᾶλλον should be construed there as "more" or "rather." The latter is the alternative preferred by all the translations with which I am aware.

[16] Take an example. Suppose Linda has a tattoo. This is a condition of her body that she was in very direct control of by going to a tattoo parlor and getting tattooed. Suppose she also has a skin condition that could have been avoided by avoiding certain activities (swimming in chlorinated water, say). In this latter case, she also is in control of the condition, but in an obviously less direct way.

somewhat more narrowly than we commonly do today. Courage is primarily concerned with facing mortal danger in war (III 6, 1115a29-31). Hence, someone who has never had occasion to go to war would likely never have had occasion to practice the sorts of behaviors necessary to acquire courage. By contrast, everyone is given ample opportunity to practice the behaviors associated with temperance and hence, there is a way in which we have more control over whether we acquire temperance than over whether we acquire courage. When Aristotle says that for this reason self-indulgence is more voluntary, he is calling attention to precisely this fact.

I think Aristotle is making a similar point in part (i) when he appeals to the role that pleasure and pain play in bringing about cowardice or self-indulgence. First, the reason that it matters that cowardice is caused by pain and temperance is caused by pleasure can be explained by reference to a remark that Aristotle made earlier in book III where he explained that courage is "justly praised" (*dikaiôs epainetai*) because "it is harder to face what is painful than it is to abstain from what is pleasant" (III 9, 1117a34-35). Given this asymmetry between pleasure and pain, it stands to reason that becoming courageous is more difficult than becoming temperate. And from this it is easy to see how one could get to the conclusion that self-indulgence is more voluntary. It is more voluntary because the agent had more control over whether she acquired it.[17]

A similar account applies to the second consideration that Aristotle offers in part (i). When Aristotle points out that pain destroys the nature of the sufferer he is alluding to the idea,

[17] Compare the example I gave in a the preceding note. Linda had more control over getting her tattoo than over getting her skin condition. All she had to do to avoid getting her tattoo was not go to the tattoo parlor and purchase the tattoo. By contrast, we may imagine that in order to avoid getting her skin condition she would have had to practice a variety of preventative measures.

clearly found in the *EE*, that pain involves an element of force.[18] Since it involves an element of force, the agent has less control, and hence acquiring the condition is less voluntary.

Now, it is worth noting at this point that the considerations in Passage 5 clearly lend themselves as well to the conclusion that some *actions* may be more voluntary than others. If the fact that a state of character came about as a result of pain makes it less voluntary, the same should be true of an action that is a response to pain. Similarly, if a cowardly character state is less voluntary because the agent had less opportunity to avoid it, the same should apply to the actions that directly result from that cowardly character state. In the remainder of the passage Aristotle makes this explicit:

5. [iii] However, cowardice seems to be more voluntary than particular cowardly actions. For cowardice itself involves no pain, but the particular actions disturb us because of the pain [that causes them], so that people actually throw away their weapons and do all the other disgraceful actions. That is why these actions even seem to be forced. For the intemperate person the reverse is true. The particular actions are voluntary (for they are done on the basis of appetite and hence, desire); but the whole condition is less voluntary [than the actions], since no one has an appetite to be intemperate. (1119a27-33)

Aristotle's comparison here has the straightforward implication that self-indulgent actions are more voluntary than cowardly ones: cowardly actions are less voluntary than cowardly states of character; cowardly states of character are less voluntary than self-indulgent states of character; self-indulgent states of character are less voluntary than self-indulgent actions.

Passage 5, then, employs a scalar conception of voluntariness and applies it to both actions and states of character. The account of voluntary action in III 1, however, cannot accomodate the idea that voluntariness comes in degrees. There Aristotle sets down two

[18] See, for example, *EE* II 7, 1223a30-35, 1223b19-20, II 8, 1224a30-31, 38, 1224b15-23 (cf. *NE* III 1, 1110b11-12).

individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for an action to count as voluntary: it must have its origin (*archê*) in the agent and it must be done with relevant knowledge of the particulars of the agent's circumstances. Either an action meets these two criteria or it does not; there is no room for degrees of voluntariness. But, as I have already pointed out, the broader conception of voluntariness found in III 5 can accommodate the idea that voluntariness comes in degrees. I conclude, then, that III 12 employs the same broad conception of voluntariness as III 5 does. The fact that III 12 explicitly applies this conception to actions indicates that even an action can be voluntary in the broad sense.

This provides us with a very attractive way of solving the apparent inconsistency between the idea in III 1 that actions done in drunken ignorance are non-voluntary and the claim in III 5 that they are voluntary. In the latter case, Aristotle is employing the broader notion, whereas in the former, he is employing the narrower one. There is nothing inconsistent about an action's failing to qualify as voluntary on the narrow conception, but qualifying as voluntary on the broader conception.

6. Conclusion.

The widely held assumption, then, that voluntariness is a necessary condition for accountability is in a way right and in a way wrong. Since there are two distinct conceptions of voluntariness at work in the *NE* there are two different formulations of this assumption, one of which is false, one of which is true. It is false that the III 1 conception of voluntariness is a necessary condition for accountability, since actions which in III 1 count as non-voluntary are still accountable. Those very same actions, however, are voluntary on the broader conception of

voluntariness. On this broader conception, where an action's being voluntary is identified with the action's being under the agent's control, voluntariness is a necessary condition for accountability. In the next chapter, I show how this fact bears importantly on how we understand the explanatory relationship between voluntariness and accountability in the *NE*.

5.

Decision, rational control, and the voluntary in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

1. Introduction

In Chapter 3 I focused on the following question as it applies to the account of voluntary action in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

(1) Why are fully-developed human agents characteristically accountable for their voluntary actions?

One of the aims of this chapter is to answer this question as it applies to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In light of what we have seen in the preceding chapter, however, we can state further questions that a complete response to (1) would answer. Since actions that *NE* III 1 classifies as non-voluntary[1] are sometimes blameworthy, we ought also to be able to answer:

(2) What is it about non-voluntary actions in virtue of which the agent is sometimes accountable for them?

[1] In what follows I shall simply refer to these actions as "non-voluntary" where this should be understood to mean "non-voluntary according to narrow conception of voluntary action in *NE* III 1 (but voluntary according to the broader conception)."

The answer we give to (2) should point to some feature that that these non-voluntary actions have which (i) is shared by the voluntary actions of fully-developed adults and (ii) which explains why the agent is accountable for them. We also saw in the preceding chapter that voluntariness (on the broad conception) and accountability both come in degrees. Hence we ought to be able to answer the further question:

(3) Why is it that some actions are less voluntary than others?

The answer to this question should also explain why one is less accountable for some actions than others.

Now, we have already seen a preliminary indication of how Aristotle would answer each of these questions. Recall that in III 5, Aristotle explains why one is accountable for an action done in drunken ignorance by appealing to the idea that the action is in control (*kurios*) of the action in a way, thus answering (2).[2] Moreover, we saw that in III 12 control also seems to explain why voluntariness and accountability comes in degrees.[3] It comes in degrees becomes we have more control over some things, including some actions, than others. From this we get a preliminary answer to (3). All this suggests an answer to (1): the reason fully-developed humans are characteristically accountable for their voluntary actions is that their voluntary actions are characteristically under their control, at least in some minimal way.

What remains is to flesh out the relevant notion of control. In virtue of what does an agent exercise control over an action? A suitable account would explain three data, corresponding to the three questions listed above:

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[2] See, esp., *NE* III 5 1113b31-1114a3 (Passage 3 in Chapter 4) and 1114a1-3.

[3] See the discussion of III 12, 1119a21-33 in Chapter 4, section 5.

(i) Fully-developed adult agents exercise control over the actions that III 1 classifies as voluntary.

(ii) They also are in control of at least some of their non-voluntary actions.

(iii) They are in control of some actions more than others.

The explanation of these data that I argue for makes crucial reference to decision (*prohairesis*), which Aristotle investigates immediately after his treatment of voluntary action. The paradigmatic case of an action that an agent controls and which the agent is accountable for is an action done on the basis of decision. This claim may seem incongruous with these data because, first, actions classified as involuntary in *NE* III 1 include actions that are not done on decision; second, non-voluntary actions are not done on the basis of decision; and, third, whether an action is done on decision or not is an all or nothing affair. The reason that this account is able to explain the data, however, is that there are indirect ways in which an action may be caused by decision. To take a simple case, the non-voluntary drunken actions discussed in III 5 are under the agent's control because they were caused by the agent's deciding to get drunk. Similarly, some actions may be more and less subject to control by virtue of deciding, explaining (iii). Finally, I argue, Aristotle holds that, at least in normal cases, all an agent's voluntary actions are connected to his capacity for decision in such a way as for him to be properly held accountable for them.

I proceed as follows. I begin in section 2 in the natural place, by looking into what may be gleaned about what makes an agent accountable for an action from the account of the voluntary in III 1. It is often thought that there what makes an action voluntary is simply that it has its origin in the agent. From this it has sometimes been inferred that for Aristotle what makes

an agent accountable for an action is simply that it has its origin in the agent. I argue that things are not this simple. The question of what makes an action voluntary needs to be distinguished from the question of what makes an agent accountable for an action. On the latter question, I argue, III 1 provides very good reason to believe that what makes someone accountable for an action is that that action reflects an exercise of the agent's capacity for deliberation.

In section 3 I argue that this suggestion is confirmed by Aristotle's remarks about decision in III 2 and elsewhere. The obvious challenge for this reading, however, is that it leaves unexplained why one is accountable for voluntary actions that are not done on the basis of decision. An akratic action, for example, is not only not done on the basis of decision — in fact it is done *contrary* to decision — yet Aristotle clearly thinks that akratic agents are blameworthy for their akratic behavior. I take up this issue in section 4. I argue that, on Aristotle's view the reason that akratic actions and other bad non-deliberative actions are blameworthy is that they reflect, albeit indirectly, a failure on the part of the agent's exercise of her deliberative capacity to form or maintain certain non-rational dispositions.

2. Action-origination, voluntariness, and accountability in *NE* III 1

As we saw in Chapter 3, in *EE* II 6, Aristotle speaks of being responsible (*aitios*) for an action, where this is meant to bear some connection to being accountable for an action. Being responsible for an action in the relevant sense, however, is simply a matter of being causally-responsible for the action, and this is shown in part by the fact that Aristotle fleshes out responsibility for action in terms of being the origin (*archê*) of the action.[4] This fact raised a

[4] See Chapter 3, section 2.

question about how causal-responsibility is meant to relate to accountability. A similar set of questions arises in the *NE*. The *NE* employs the concept of action-origination also. There are two conditions that an action must meet to count as voluntary: it must be done with the relevant knowledge of particulars, and it must have its origin within the agent (1111a22-24). It is not obvious that that this latter condition is to be understood in the same way as we understood talk of action-origination in the *EE*, though. In particular, in the *NE* Aristotle does not speak of an action's origin being *the agent*, as he did in the *EE*, but rather of the origin being *in* the agent. I shall begin, then, by considering what Aristotle has in mind with this locution. I shall argue that by speaking in this way, Aristotle is alluding to the account of animal self-locomotion that he works out in the psychological works, especially the *De Motu Animalium*, according to which there is a literal, spatial sense in which an animal's self-locomotions originate within the animal itself. I go on to consider the question of what the relationship is between action-origination and accountability.

Aristotle opens his discussion of voluntary action in III 1 with a few brief remarks about the motivation for treating the topic (1109b30-35)[5] and goes on, rather abruptly, to analyse one of the two paradigm cases of an involuntary action, an action done by force. It is in this connection that he introduces the notion of the origin of an action. What distinguishes action done by force from other actions is that the former have their origin external to the agent,[6] where an origin is external when "the agent or the patient[7] contributes nothing" (1110a1-3). He explains this idea by means of an example: "if, for instance, a wind or people who have him in their control were to

[5] Quoted as Passage 1 in Chapter 4.
[6] "What is forced is that the origin of which is external" (1110a1).
[7] Irwin translates ἢ ὸ πάσχων as "or [rather] the victim." This translation may well be right but that is a contentious issue, for which reason I have adopted the more literal and neutral translation "or the patient."

carry him off" (1110a3). On the traditional interpretation, Aristotle has in mind here the following sort of case. A ship gets caught in a storm with winds so strong that the captain is helpless to prevent the ship from arriving at a certain place. In this case the event, the captain's arriving at that place, is involuntary because its origin was in the wind and not the captain himself. Alternatively, if someone is physically carried somewhere by kidnappers, the even, arriving at a certain place, on the part of the victim, is something done by force and hence involuntarily because its origin lies with the kidnappers and not the victim himself.[8]

This construal of Aristotle's examples leaves it unclear whether his talk of the origin of an action is to be understood in a strict, literal sense, or in a loose, intuitive sense. Consider, for example, the way that someone may defend her aggressive behavior by saying that the other party "started" the dispute.[9] When someone makes this kind of excuse, she need not have in mind any very precise sense in which her opponent is the origin of the action. I think, however, that what Aristotle goes on to say in the rest of the chapter makes it clear that he is not merely using the language of action-origination in this loose way.

Immediately after discussing paradigm cases of action done by force, Aristotle observes that there are other cases where it is more controversial whether the action is voluntary or not:

1. But what about actions done because of fear of greater evils or because of something fine? Suppose, for instance, a tyrant tells you to do something shameful, when he has control over your parents and children and if you do it, they will live, but if not, they will die. These cases raise dispute about whether they are voluntary or involuntary. (1110a4-8)

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[8] These are not, of course, the only possible construals of these examples. For an alternative construal, see Cooper (2013, pp. 280-282).

[9] A kind of case that Aristotle himself alludes to in the discussion of voluntary action in *NE* V 8, 1135b25-27, when he points out that "it is right to judge that actions caused by spirit do not result from forethought since the principle is not the agent who acted on spirit (οὐ γὰρ ἄρχει ὁ θυμῷ ποιῶν), but the person who provoked him to anger."

To determine whether such actions are involuntary, Aristotle focuses specifically on one such case, namely a case in which a cargo ship that gets caught in a storm and to make it through the storm, the captain must throw the cargo overboard, at great expense, we may imagine, both to himself and to his clients.

In this case it is intuitive in Greek as in English, to say that the captain was forced to act as he did. He had no other choice, we may say. Aristotle acknowledges that there is something right about this. It is true, he says, that the action type "throwing cargo overboard" is, in the abstract, something that no one would do voluntarily. But it is something that one would voluntarily do under certain circumstances, like the circumstances described. Hence, he concludes that the actions are "mixed" — they involve an involuntary component, but nonetheless in the particular situation, the action is voluntary (1110a11-15). And at least part of the basis for this conclusion seems to be that the action originates within the agent himself, where this is understood in a spatial sense. Consider the specific wording that Aristotle uses when he formulates this conclusion: "He [viz. the captain] acts voluntarily. For the origin of the motion of the parts of his body is within him and [it is in this motion] that the action consists" (1110a15-17). Irwin's translation here actually obscures somewhat the oddness of Aristotle's language. Where Irwin translates "the parts of the body," the Greek reads *ta organika merê* which, if we are to adopt a more literal translation, would translate as "the instrumental parts." Irwin's translation is reasonable because the parts of the body, as Aristotle tells us in the *De Anima*, are essentially things that are such as to be used instrumentally (*organika*) by the

soul.[10] Nonetheless, the fact that Aristotle uses the quasi-technical language of his theoretical works is, I think, important. Aristotle is emphasizing that viewed from an empirical, physical standpoint there is a sense in which the captain's movements originate within him — within him, that is, in a spatial sense. This reading finds support from what Aristotle has to say about force in the *Eudemian Ethics*. There he uses as an example of a forced action someone's taking someone else's hand and using it to hit someone (1224b11-15). The reason that Aristotle chooses this example seems to be that he takes it to be a clear example of a case in which a movement physically originates externally to the agent. In both cases what seems to be at issue is whether the action physically originates within the agent.

This reading finds further support from the treatment of animal self-locomotion in the *De Motu Animalium*. According to Aristotle, all animal self-locomotion involves three relata: an unmoved mover, a moved mover, and a moved thing. The unmoved mover is what initiates the motion of the moved mover (a desire) which in turn moves the animal's body (the moved thing). In *De Motu Animalium* 1, Aristotle makes it clear that he thinks that the unmoved mover is something that is *spatially* unmoved within the animal. He uses as an example of an unmoved mover a joint of a limb which must remain at rest for the animal to walk and he extrapolates to animal self-locomotion in general as follows: "Accordingly it is plain that each animal as a whole must have within itself a point at rest, whence will be the origin of that which is moved and supporting itself upon which it will be moved both as a complete whole and in its members" (698b4-7). There is no ambiguity that Aristotle is here speaking of in a literal, spatial

[10] See, for example, *De Anima* III 1 where Aristotle concludes that soul is a "first actuality of a natural body which has life in capacity" and goes on to add: "such a sort of body is one which is such as to be used instrumentally (ὀργανικόν)" and gives as examples how various parts of plants are used (412a27-b4).

sense. This suggests that Aristotle does have a theory according to which he can defend the idea that voluntary movements (of which animal self-locomotions are a subclass) physically have their origin in something within the agent.

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I think it is clear, then, that part of what it is for an action to be voluntary is for the action to physically originate within the agent. This has sometimes been thought to be the feature of voluntary actions by virtue of which people are (at least characteristically) accountable for them. Harry Frankfurt (1987), for example, criticizes Aristotle as follows:

> The location of a moving principle with respect to the agent's body is plainly less relevant [with regard to the question whether the agent is responsible (viz. accountable) for the action] than its "location" with respect to the agent's volition. What counts, even with respect to a moving principle that operates as an element of his psychic life, is whether or not the agent has constituted himself to include it." (p. 39).

Now, in speaking of whether the agent has "constituted himself" to include a given moving-principle, Frankfurt is alluding to his own view about what makes someone responsible (by which he seems to mean "morally responsible") for an action. The fundamental point, however, is clear: many things may spatially originate within us (not only physiological processes but also actions) to which we as agents don't bear the right kind of relationship to be held accountable for them. The fact that an action is caused by me does not suffice to make it my own in the relevant sense.

I think it is clear, however, that Aristotle does not make the crude error that Frankfurt alleges. Here we need to distinguish between the question of what makes the action voluntary and the question of what makes the agent accountable for the action. While it is true that

voluntariness and accountability tend to go together, at least in ordinary cases of adult human agents, they are certainly distinct conceptually, and Aristotle is aware of this. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Aristotle grants that nonhuman animals do things voluntarily, but presumably he does not think that these animals are accountable for their actions in the same way that fully developed human agents are. Hence there is no reason to assume that the facts that make a given action voluntary also in and of themselves explain why that agent is accountable for the action. While it is true that at least part of what makes an action voluntary is that it physically originates in the agent, this feature does not by itself explain why our voluntary actions are attributable to us, nor why we are accountable for these actions.

Moreover, there is textual support in III 1 for thinking that Aristotle does not think that spatial origination is what explains why an agent is accountable for an action. Consider what he goes on to say immediately after drawing the inference that the captain in the cargo-ship example acts voluntarily:

2. But in the case of some such actions, the agent is sometimes even praiseworthy, when he withstands shameful or painful things in exchange for great and noble things. In the reverse case he is blamed. For withstanding shameful things for the sake of nothing noble or proportionate is a feature of the base person. (1110a19-23)

What is Aristotle doing here? I suggest that he is pointing out that the mere fact that the action is voluntary and bad, in some sense, does not mean that the agent is blameworthy for it. This is why he draws attention to cases where the agent is "even" (emphatic *kai*) praiseworthy. The idea is that although the agent underwent shameful or painful things, he is praiseworthy because he withstood those things for noble reasons. Conversely when someone does something shameful for something that is not correspondingly noble, he is blameworthy. An example of what

Aristotle has in mind, with the latter case may be the sort of thing that adolescent boys sometimes do when they dare each other to perform disgusting or humiliating acts — licking unsanitary surfaces, for example — in exchange for a small reward, say, ten dollars. Such behavior is blameworthy, we may imagine, because it reflects lack of self-respect on the part of the agent, or some similar fault.

The fact that voluntary actions are caused by the agent's desires in some way allows us to make good sense of why in the paradigm cases of forced action the agent is not accountable whereas in cases of mixed actions the agent is accountable. Suppose, for example, someone is kidnapped and held in captivity in Scranton, Pennsylvania for a year. If you were to ask this person: "why did you live in Scranton?" his answer would not reflect anything about his own motivations for living there. He lived there simply because he was held there in captivity. A corresponding mixed action, then, might be one as follows. Someone loathes living in Scranton, but she is unable to find a job anywhere else so, faced with the option of continue living in Scranton with a roof over her head or living elsewhere without one, she grudging accepts her fate and lives in Scranton. If you were to ask this reluctant Scrantonian why she lived there, her answer *would* advert to some feature of her motivational set.

But what feature or features of the agent's motivational set, more specifically, is relevant to whether the agent is accountable for her action? In response to this question, I shall begin by considering what I take to be the principal competitor to the view that I shall go on to defend. By seeing why this view is unsatisfactory we shall, at the same time, find evidence in favor of the reading that I shall propose.

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According to the view that I shall call *the Volitional Reading*, the mere fact that an action originated in a desire of the agent's is sufficient to make the agent accountable for that action. This reading does have some explanatory power in explaining the connection between voluntariness and accountability. Consider an example. Suppose Mikaela is feeding her dog some sausages and it mistakenly bites one of your fingers, mistaking it for a sausage. Does this show that her dog is a "bad dog"? I think the answer is obviously not. The fact that the dog did not bite your hand on purpose seems very important here. The reason this seems important is that it indicates that the bad action, biting Mikaela's hand, does not reflect some bad desire or some bad desiderative disposition on the part of the dog. If the dog had intentionally bitten her hand it would reflect some bad desire or desiderative disposition the basis of which she may evaluate the dog. In judging whether the volitional reading is right, however, we need to bear in mind the distinction that I drew above between mere evaluability and a specific kind of evaluability which I have been calling accountability. It may be true that the fact that a good action reflects some desire (good or bad or neither) on the part of the agent is enough to make the agent evaluable for the action in some sense. But the fact that the agent is evaluable for the action in some sense does not imply that the agent is evaluable for it in the way distinctive of ethical agents. A psychologist, for example, may infer certain facts about an agent's motivational dispositions from considering her behavior, but this does not seem to be the same kind of thing that we do when we engage in praise and blame for ethically significant actions. Simply evaluating the agent's motivational dispositions is consistent with what Strawson (1962) calls taking the objective stance, but praising and blaming is not.

This difference is important because, I take it, we tend to think that a bad action may reflect a bad desire or desiderative disposition without the agent being blameworthy for it. This is particularly clear in pathological cases. The behavior of the compulsive kleptomaniac, for example, seems importantly different when it comes to accountability than the behavior of the clear-headed habitual shoplifter. Philosophers have proposed a variety of different ways of fleshing out how the difference between these two kinds of cases should be understood. We have already seen one such proposal from Harry Frankfurt, who holds that for an agent to be responsible for an action, that agent must have constituted herself so as to include it. Other philosophers have tried to get at the distinction in other ways, for example, by speaking of whether the agent has a second-order pro-attitude toward the desire, or whether the desire reflects a genuine judgment on the part of the agent. But whichever of these views one prefers, I think the intuitive thought is clear. There are some desires, even some bad desires, that we may just be stuck with. When they control our behavior that is not a way of our being active but a way of our being passive. In this respect action on desires such as these, differs from action on the basis of desires that are informed by our clear-headed assessment of what is best to do. Any plausible account of the conditions under which an agent is accountable for an action needs to say at least something about this intuitive distinction.

Returning to Aristotle, then, we may ask two questions. First, does Aristotle really lump together these two classes of desires — those like mere appetites that we are simply stuck with, and those that reflect our considered evaluative outlook — in the unattractive way that the Volitional Reading suggests? It should already be clear from what I have said above that the answer is no. On Aristotle's view there is a deep difference between the way that human beings

go about living their lives and the way that non-human animals do. While non-human animals are simply guided by first-order desires, characteristically human actions are results of decision. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, it is perfectly clear that the paradigm cases of actions for which the agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy are actions done on the basis of decision. Whenever the virtuous person acts virtuously, for example, he acts on the basis of a decision. I propose, then, that if we want to understand what makes someone accountable for an action, we ought to begin by focusing on these cases. What happens when an agent acts on the basis of decision? And what, if anything, about the fact that the agent acts on the basis of decision explains why the agent is accountable for those actions? To answer these questions, I will temporarily set aside the Volitional Reading and consider what Aristotle has to say about decision, in greater depth. I will then return to the Volitional Reading and suggests that Aristotle's remarks about decision speak against that reading and in favor of the reading that I wish to propose.

3. Decision and accountability

Decision and related topics are treated in the chapters immediately after Aristotle's treatment of voluntary action in III 1. Decision is a kind of desire and hence whenever an agent acts on the basis of decision, he acts voluntarily. It is a form of desire not accessible to non-human animals. It is not, however, the only kind of desire that only humans are subject to. In *NE* III 4, Aristotle discusses a form of desire that he calls *boulêsis,* which I shall translate as "wish" for reasons that will become clear in a moment. One reason that both decision and wish are not accessible to non-human animals is that both involve the capacity to conceptualize things as

good. This capacity, for Aristotle, requires the use of reason. Decision and wish differ, however, in two important ways.

The first is that they have different sets of objects. Possible objects of wish, but not decision, include things that are impossible. I can wish, for example, that I could turn myself invisible at will. I cannot decide to do so, though, because this is impossible. Similarly, one can wish for, but not decide on, things that are possible but beyond one's own control. A sports fan may wish for her favorite team to win a match, but she cannot decide that her team will win because that is not under her control. Finally, even among things that are within one's control, not all of them are possible objects of decision. I may wish, for example, to improve my cardiovascular health, and I may know that I can achieve this through my own efforts. Even so, improving my cardiovascular health is not the right kind of thing for me to decide on. To see why, we need to consider Aristotle's remark that the object of a decision is not the end, but what is toward the end (*pros ton telon*). What he seems to have in mind with this remark is that the object of the decision needs to be more determinate than the ultimate goal of the decision.

This brings me to the second main difference between decision and wish. While both decision and wish involve conceptualizing something as good, the capacity to form decisions involves another rational capacity in addition. Let us stick with the example of my desire to improve my cardiovascular health. Before I can act for the sake of improving my health, I need to formulate some kind of plan to achieve that end. To formulate this plan, I must engage in some process of reasoning about how that end can be realised. The process of reasoning is what Aristotle calls *bouleusis*, which I shall translate as "deliberation." Deliberation can involve means-end reasoning (for example, deliberating about what kind of exercises or dietary changes

will be most effective), but it can also involve reasoning about the constitution of the end itself: what does good cardiovascular health consist in? Is it simply a matter of having a good resting heart rate? A good blood pressure level? Both? Something further still? What is a good resting heart rate, anyway? What about a good blood pressure level? And so on. Only once this process of deliberation is complete and I have arrived at a fairly concrete conclusion about something within my immediate control that I can do, am I able to form a decision to perform that action.

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So much, then, for what a decision is. What does decision have to do with accountability? To answer this question, let me begin by calling attention to a remark that occurs at the very beginning of Aristotle's discussion of decision, in a passage which bears quite directly on the issue I am interested in here (i.e. the question of what makes someone accountable for an action): "Now that we have define the voluntary and the involuntary, the next task is to discuss decision; for decision seems to be most proper to virtue and to distinguish characters from one another better than actions do" (III 2, 1111b4-6). What Aristotle is getting at here can be understood in light of a parallel remark that he makes in the *Eudemian Ethics* (II 11, 1228a2-4) that I discussed briefly above. There he says that by knowing someone's decisions we are better able to judge that person's character than simply by knowing her actions, and there he clearly connects this point with the question of when someone is praiseworthy or blameworthy for an action. The point Aristotle is making, I think, is intuitive enough. Recall from Chapter 2 that for someone to be praiseworthy for an action that action must not only itself be good but must also be caused in a certain way by a good quality on the part of the agent. When it is caused by a good quality in the right way we might say that it reveals or manifests that quality. By knowing the decision one

is better able to judge what qualities the action manifests. Suppose, for example, that I give homeless person a twenty dollar bill and suppose that this is the generous thing to do.[11] What Aristotle is pointing to is that it does not follow from the mere fact that I performed this action, that I acted on the basis of the virtue of generosity. On the one hand, it may have been a mere impulsive action, whereas when a generous person acts generously, he does so on the basis of a decision. But on the other hand, even if I give the person the twenty on the basis of a decision, it may not be the right sort of decision. A person who has the virtue of generosity will decide to give the homeless person the twenty because he is aware of the reasons why doing such a thing is the appropriate action in the circumstances. In my particular case, however, I may have acted from less noble motivations. Suppose, for example, that I was on the way to the movie theater on a date and I gave the man the twenty simply because I wanted to impress the person I was with. In this case, the action will not be praiseworthy because, although the action was good, it was not caused by an admirable quality on my part.[12]

Aristotle's remarks at the beginning of *NE* III 2, then, very clearly suggest that the capacity to take things as reasons for acting has an important role to play in explaining why someone is accountable for an action. Being praiseworthy involves acting for the right reasons. Being blameworthy involves acting for the wrong reasons. And to extrapolate to a picture of accountability in general, we can expect that being accountable involves acting on the basis of taking something as a reason for acting. If this is true, then the Volitional Reading is overly

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[11] A similar example is used by Lorenz (2009, p. 185).

[12] A similar account applies even to habitual actions. I may habitually express certain social or political views, not because I am aware of why they are true and care about the underlying values at stake, but rather because I want to seem to my peers to be a morally good person and thereby accrue validating "likes" on Facebook.

simplistic. Nonetheless, before we can draw this conclusion we need to connect the topic of decision with the account of voluntary action, and hence let me turn now to a passage in III 1 where Aristotle does just that.

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The passage I am referring to occurs in Aristotle's discussion of the second of the two main kinds of involuntary action, action done on account of ignorance. Recall from the preceding chapter that in order for ignorance to make an action involuntary, the ignorance must be of a certain kind and the ignorance must be the root cause of the action. Take an example. Suppose a friend of mine is sick and I make her some soup to help her get better, but to my regret, I later discover that the soup had been contaminated and her condition worsens as a result. In this case, I caused her condition to worsen involuntarily, because I didn't know that I was doing that and wanted that not to happen. But Aristotle also reasonably acknowledges that not all kinds of ignorance that may cause one to act a certain way make the resulting action involuntary. Suppose for example that Trygve is a businessman and a devoté of Ayn Rand and that as a result, he engages in a variety of unethical practices to enrich himself at the expense of others, confident in his belief that this is the best way of conducting oneself. In this case, Trygve acts in ignorance, but Aristotle would not think that this means that his unethical behavior is involuntary or that he should be excused from it. It is to carve out the distinction between these two kinds of cases that Aristotle makes the following remarks:

3. Ignorance of what is beneficial is not taken to make an action involuntary. For ignorance in the decision is not the cause of an action's being involuntary but, rather, it is the cause of the action's being vicious. It is not, in other words, ignorance of the universal, for we are blamed *because* of that. Rather the cause is ignorance of the particulars in which the action consists and is concerned with. In these cases there is

> pity and pardon. For an agent acts involuntarily if he is ignorant of one of these particulars. (1110b30-1111a2)

The main feature of this passage that I wish to call attention to is the reference to ignorance in the decision in the second sentence and the corresponding remark about why we are blamed in the sentence after that. Before we can understand the significance of those remarks, however, we need to consider what Aristotle has in mind when he contrasts ignorance of the universal with ignorance of the particular.

In using the language of the universal and the particular, Aristotle is employing the vocabulary of his syllogistic. To take the standard example, consider the syllogism: "All men are mortal, Socrates is a man; Therefore, Socrates is mortal." In this case the claim about all men is the universal premise, while the claim about Socrates is the particular. By using this terminology in relation to action, Aristotle is suggesting that actions can be understood in syllogistic terms. Take the case of my preparing soup for my ailing friend, again. The universal premise, in this case might be something like the thought: "One ought to help one's friends recover from their illnesses when one can." The particular premise would then be something like: "Chicken soup will help So-and-so recover from her illness."

The point Aristotle seems to be making, then, is that the kind of ignorance that does not excuse and which does not make an action involuntary is normative ignorance. So far, so good. It is also fairly clear why Aristotle should adopt the moniker "ignorance of the universal" to refer to this kind of ignorance. But it is much less clear why "ignorance of the universal" should be used interchangeably with "ignorance in the decision" as it apparently is in Passage 3. To answer this

question, we need to think about the connection between decisions in general and normative knowledge or ignorance.

Part of the connection is already clear. When an agent acts on the basis of a decision, he acts on the basis of his considered views about what is good or bad. These views determine the objects of wish. But recall that *decision* has as its object not the end, which is the object of wish, but rather something that is toward the end (*pros ton telon*). Hence, if we want to understand what ignorance in the decision is we ought to look for a specific kind of ignorance that deals with the things that are toward a given end. It is easy to think of morally uninteresting examples of this sort. If I wish to refuel my car and mistakenly believe that the best way of doing so would be by using leaded as opposed to unleaded gasoline, I make a mistake about what promotes the end that I wish for. But I take it that this is not the sort of ignorance in the decision that Aristotle is interested in. What we want is an explanation of how the evaluative ignorance characteristic of the vicious person manifests itself in his decision in particular.

And to answer this question it is worthwhile to consider how the evaluative knowledge of the virtuous person manifests itself in that person's decisions. This is an issue that Aristotle addresses explicitly in book VI. There we are told that what is characteristic of the the practically-wise person (the *phronimos*), the person who has the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), is that that person is good at deliberating. Now since deliberation, like decision, concerns things that are toward the goal and not the goal itself, this claim on Aristotle's part may seem to suggest that being practically wise is simply a matter of being good at finding ways to achieve one's goals. And indeed, Aristotle does think that this is *part* of what practical wisdom involves, but he is explicit that this is not *all* it involves. It is only possible for the person

who has virtue of character to be good at deliberation in the way that the practically wise person is. It is hard to see, though, why being good at deliberating should require virtue of character. Literature, film, and history are full of examples of people who seem to be very good at deliberating — very good at figuring out how to get what they want — but who use this skill for nefarious purposes.[13]

What, then, are we to make of the idea that excellence in deliberation requires virtue of character? It is important here to pay attention to the specific kind of deliberation that the practically wise person is supposed to be good at. As Aristotle himself points out (VI 5, 1140a25-31), being practically wise does not make one good at deliberating about technical matters. It is not a prerequisite on being practically wise, for example, that I be able to deliberate well about the kinds of things an electrical engineer may deliberate well about — designing circuit boards that satisfy certain technical desiderata, and the like. Rather, being practically wise makes someone good at engaging in the kind of deliberation that we must all engage in to the extent that we are responsible for managing our own lives. It is much easier to see how being good at deliberating in this domain may require virtue of character. Take a simple example.[14] Suppose that I'm working on an essay when I realize that I'm hungry and I need to get something to eat. There are a number of different ways that I could satisfy this desire. Just to take a couple of options: I can decide to go to a restaurant or I can simply stay home and prepare myself a can of soup. Judging between these two options will involve identifying and weighing a number of different considerations for and against either proposal. One consideration for making

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[13] An historical example of someone like this could be Joseph Stalin. A fictional example could be Professor Moriarty from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series

[14] This example is based on one given by Råbbas (2006, p. 7) in the service of making a different point.

some soup would be that it would take less time than going to a restaurant and hence I could return to writing my paper sooner. On the other hand, maybe I'm sick of soup and want a meal that's more tasty, which I could get by going out to eat. Add into the mix considerations having to do with the relative cost of each of these options and the health benefits or disadvantages to the respective meals, and one sees already that even making a decision about a mundane matter like what to eat for dinner can involve making a considerable number of judgement calls, negotiating between what values I want to promote. It is also clear, from this example, how character vices will impede my ability to deliberate about this matter well. If I suffer from the vice of intemperance, I will attach to more weight than I should to the fact that going out to eat will be more gustatorily pleasant. If I suffer from the vice of stinginess, I will attach more weight than I should to the fact that that going out to eat will cost me more money, and so on. If even a mundane case of deliberating requires that I make this many judgment calls and involves correspondingly many ways in which I could go wrong, think of how much more this will be true when it comes to something important like the decision of what to do with my life.

I take it, then, that the reason the practically wise person is good at deliberating is that he has the right evaluative outlook and as a result is able to successfully identify and negotiate between different reasons for acting that he may have. Returning to Passage 3, I suggest that the ignorance in the decision that Aristotle is alluding to is precisely the contrary of the intellectual excellence that is reflected in the practically wise person's decisions: what the practically wise person is good at, the vicious person is bad at. Since the practically wise person is good at identifying and weighing reasons for action, the vicious person is bad at that, and when he acts for the wrong reason or on the basis of giving some reason(s) too much weight, he thereby acts

on the basis of a kind of ignorance. This is the kind of ignorance that Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of "ignorance in the decision" in Passage 3.

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Now that we know what Aristotle is saying when he refers to ignorance in the decision, we are in a position to take up the question, more immediately relevant for us, of what he means when he says that people are blamed for this kind of ignorance (the third sentence in Passage 3). I can think of two possible ways this remark could be understood. On the one hand, one could read it as something of an aside. On this reading, Aristotle is simply pointing out that ignorance in the decision or ignorance of the universal not only fails to excuse, but in fact it is something blameworthy in its own right. The idea, then, would be that even holding certain views, apart from any connection those views have with action, is something blameworthy.

Now, I think that Aristotle *does,* in fact, think that one is blameworthy for holding morally bad opinions. But I do not think that is the point of the remark that we get here. This brings me to the second of the two possible readings of this passage, which I think is the right one. According to this reading, Aristotle's remark is meant to pinpoint the feature of the actions that he is considering in virtue of which the agent is blameworthy for them. So, since we are considering cases in which an agent acts on account of ignorance in the decision, Aristotle is saying that the fact that his decision involves ignorance in the way I have explained is precisely the reason that he is blamed for the resulting bad action.

There are a number of considerations that speak decisively in favor of this latter reading. First, consider again at the context within which this remark occurs. In the preceding sentence Aristotle says that ignorance in the decision is the cause of an action's being vicious. This

suggests that what Aristotle is concerned with is specifically what kinds of ignorance make or fail to make an agent blameworthy for an action. Second, this reading is supported by the wording that Aristotle uses when he says that the agent is blamed for this kind of ignorance. After the preposition *dia* ("because") we have the emphatic particle *ge*, which is used to emphasize the word it precedes (a nuance that I have tried to preserve in the English by putting "because" in italics). This suggests that the point that Aristotle wants to emphasize is not that there is a kind of ignorance which is blameworthy but rather what the *cause* of blame in the cases he is concerned with is: a vicious person is blameworthy for his vicious actions not *despite* the fact that this action is done on the basis of a kind of ignorance, but rather *because* the action is done on the basis of a kind of ignorance.

Passage 3, then, clearly speaks against the Volitional Reading. The reason one is blameworthy for a vicious action is not simply that such an action is caused by a desire which happens to miss the mean. Rather, one is blameworthy for such an action because of its causal connection to the agent's evaluative outlook. Such an action reflects the fact that the agent has made the wrong judgements about certain issues, what counts as a reason for what, how much a given consideration ought to matter, and so on.

I conclude, then, that the capacity to take things as reasons for acting has a crucial role to play in explaining why, in these cases, the agent is accountable for her action. In paradigm cases of praiseworthy and blameworthy actions, the explanation of why the agent is praiseworthy or blameworthy must make reference not only to the agent's desiderative dispositions, but also to his capacity to take things as reasons for acting, which is reflected in his decisions. There remains, however, the question of why one is accountable for actions that are not done on the

basis of decision. I turn to that topic now, and I shall argue that the reason one is accountable for these actions as well has to do with the fact that they are under the agent's indirect rational control.

4. Accountability for non-deliberative actions

Call actions that are *not* done on the basis of decision *non-deliberative actions*. What kinds of non-deliberative actions are there? Well, as I pointed out before, all the actions of animals and children are non-deliberative. But these are not our concern here since we are interested specifically in accountability. What kind of non-deliberative actions do normal adult agents perform? These can be divided into two categories depending on whether the action is *contrary* to a decision or simply not done *on the basis* of decision. Actions that are contrary to decision, of course, are akratic or un-self-controlled actions, whereas the other sort of action would be a genuinely impulsive actions.[15] Nowhere does Aristotle discuss impulsive actions with the level of detail that would allow us to reach conclusions about what makes the agent accountable for these actions. He does, however, discuss akratic actions and why one is accountable for them at at some length. Hence, I will confine my attention here to those actions. It will be clear,

[15] It is important to note here that the class of actions that qualify as genuinely impulsive will, on Aristotle's view, be smaller than one may expect. As Irwin (1999, p. 214), not all actions that are done on the basis of decision are *immediately preceded* by decision. Consider the following example. Suppose Stig anticipates the possibility that a fire may occur in his house and he deliberates, as a precautionary measure, about how best to respond in that case. He might, for example, decide on a certain evacuation plan such that if he is awoken in the middle of the night by the fire alarm, he immediately follows the procedure he previously decided on. When Stig immediately follows his predetermined evacuation procedure, he acts on the basis of a decision, according to Aristotle (see *NE* III 8, 1117a16-22). A great many of actions — including virtuous and vicious actions — are done on the basis of decision in this way. A virtuous person, for example, may deliberate about when to lend someone money, and decide to do so under certain conditions. When she recognizes that those conditions obtain, she does not deliberate again, but rather immediately enacts her previously made decision.

moreover, that the account that I give of why one is accountable for akratic actions ought also to apply to genuinely impulsive actions as well.

I begin by briefly considering the account of akratic action that Aristotle provides in VII 3. The most important idea in that chapter for my purposes is that even akratic actions are in some way caused by the agent's practical intellect. I go on to discuss how more precisely this is true and I show that this explains why one is accountable for one's akratic actions. VII 3 is, of course, one of the most controversial chapters in the whole *Nicomachean Ethics*. Hence, I will not attempt to provide a complete reading of the chapter. It is not necessary to do so, however, for my purposes.

For Aristotle, part of what calls out for explanation about akratic action is that akratic action takes place against the agent's knowledge or belief about what she ought to do. This is the main focus of VII 3. To make it more comprehensible how someone may act against her knowledge, Aristotle employs two distinctions. The first distinction is between merely having knowledge and using it (1146b31-35). The second is between a universal and a particular proposition (*protasis*, 1146b35-1147a10). About the first distinction, Aristotle concludes that the akratic agent has knowledge only in the weaker sense — he has it but does not use it. And about the latter distinction, Aristotle concludes that the knowledge at issue is of a particular proposition and not a universal.

Now the idea that the akratic agent is ignorant in a way of the particulars of his action may seem surprising. After all, as we saw in Passage 3 above, ignorance of the particulars is meant to exculpate and make an action involuntary. Why, then, does the akratic agent's ignorance neither exculpate nor make his action involuntary? There are two possible explanations. The first

would be that the ignorance of the akratic and the ignorance that makes an action involuntary have different objects. Call this the *Object Reading*. On the alternative reading, the forms of ignorance involved in both cases have the same object but they differ in some other way. I shall argue that the latter interpretation is correct, but I shall begin by considering the former.

There is no room to doubt that when Aristotle speaks of ignorance of the particular in Passage 3 he is referring to the particular premise in a practical syllogism. There is room for doubt, however, about Aristotle's corresponding remarks about the ignorance which the akratic is subject to. Specifically, a number of commentators have argued that the particular proposition that the akratic agent is ignorant of is not the middle premise in the syllogism, but rather the conclusion of the syllogism. This is the position, for example, of Anthony Kenny (1966). A major challenge for such a view, of course, concerns its ability to explain Aristotle's remarks about the universal and the particular premise which read as follows.

4. Perhaps, for instance, someone knows that dry things benefit every human being, and that he himself is a human being, or that this sort of thing is dry; but he either does not have or does not activate the knowledge that this particular thing is of this sort. These ways [of knowing and not knowing], then, make such a remarkable difference that it seems quite intelligible [for someone acting against his knowledge to have the one sort of understanding, but astounding if he has the other sort. (1147a5-10)

The natural way to read this passage would be to take Aristotle as saying that when someone, for example, akratically neglects to eat something dry, that action involves a failure either to have or to employ (*hê ouk echei hê ouk energei*, 1147a7) the particular premise that this thing is dry. Kenny, however, rejects this reading and suggests instead that this distinction and the one that precedes are not "put forward as a solution to [the problem of how the akratic acts contrary to his knowledge]: the incontinent man [viz. the akratic] is not mentioned in them. Aristotle is simply

explaining one sense in which a man can εἰδῶς ἃ μὴ δεῖ πράττειν [‘knowingly do what he ought not to’]” (p. 173). Rather, Kenny suggests, Aristotle’s own solution to the problem is presented only later in the chapter, after the introduction of those two distinctions.

On the reading that Kenny defends, the akratic agent is not ignorant of the particular fact (e.g. “this is dry”) at all, but rather his ignorance concerns the conclusion of the practical syllogism, “I ought not to eat this,” *vel sim*. I think Kenny is right that the akratic agent fails to employ his understanding of the fact that what he is doing is wrong, but I also think, *pace* Kenny, that Passage 4 is best read as endorsing the idea that the akratic’s cognitive failure involves at least in part a cognitive failure with respect to the particular premise. Moreover, an interpretation has recently been argued for by Hendrik Lorenz (2013) that allows us to make good sense of how these remarks are relevant to what Aristotle goes on to say in Passage 4. Lorenz points out (p. 246) that in Passage 4 in describing the failure to use the particular premise, Aristotle uses the verb *energien* and not the verb *theôrein*, which was used earlier at 1146b33-35. This verbal difference is important. The Greek noun *epistêmê*, although often translated as “knowledge,” is more properly translated as “understanding.” Having *epistêmê* of something is not merely a matter of knowing it but, rather, it is a matter of grasping the explanations of that thing as explanations. The activity of using one’s *epistêmê* is what Aristotle calls contemplating (*theôrein*) and, hence, contemplating has as its object the same object as the *epistêmê* in question has. Contemplating something, however, will at the same time involve using, in a way, the pieces of knowledge that explain the fact or phenomenon in question. Contemplating a geometrical theorem, for example, is not merely a matter of calling to mind the fact that the theorem obtains, but rather it involves calling to mind both that the theorem obtains and the explanation for why it

does. Hence contemplating the theorem in this case will involve using, in a way, one's knowledge of the axioms and intermediate steps from which it follows. The fact that Aristotle speaks not of contemplating the particular premise but rather of *using* it suggests, then, the following picture. The akratic agent fails to contemplate the fact that he ought not do what he is doing. But the failure to contemplate consists in failure to use some other piece of information he has, namely the particular premise. He does not grasp the particular premise as part of the explanation for why the action in question is wrong.

Once we understand Aristotle in this way, we are able to see both why the Object Reading is wrong and why there is no inconsistency between VII 3 and III 1. This picture suggests that the Object Reading is wrong because it suggests that the agent *does* fail to actively employ knowledge of the particular premise. Nonetheless, failing to employ the particular premise in the specific way that Aristotle is referring to is consistent with being *aware* of the fact that the proposition is true. The failure to employ the premise is a failure to grasp it as a reason to not perform the act in question. By contrast, when Aristotle speaks of the kind of ignorance that makes an action involuntary and which exculpates he is very clearly referring to a failure of awareness. A non-human animal may act voluntarily, as we saw, and hence the kind of cognitive grasp that is required for voluntary action must be intellectually lower-powered than *epistêmê*.

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This explains why the akratic agent's ignorance does not exculpate in the same way that the particular ignorance in III 1 does. It does not, however, explain why the akratic agent *is* blameworthy for what he has done. To answer this question, we need to consider what Aristotle goes on to say in the lines immediately after Passage 3.

5. Further, human beings may have understanding in a way different from those we have described. For we see that having without using includes different types of having; hence some people, such as those asleep or mad or drunk, both have knowledge in a way and do not have it. Moreover, this is the condition of those affected by strong feelings. For spirited reactions, sexual appetites, and some conditions of this sort clearly [both disturb knowledge and] disturb the body as well and even produce fits of madness in some people. Clearly, then, [since akratic people are also affected by strong feelings], we should say that they have knowledge in a way similar to these people. (1147a10-18)

When Aristotle says in lines 10-11 that there is a different kind of having but not using than those now mentioned (*tôn nun rhêthentôn*), he is introducing a contrast between the kind of case he alluded to at 1146b33-35 when he spoke of someone who has understanding but is not contemplating (*theôrein*). What is the relevant contrast? Kenny suggests that the difference is that an awake, sober, sane person who, for example, understands geometry may employ that piece of understanding at will, but someone who is not employing some peice of understanding because he is asleep, mad or drunk will thereby be prevented from employing that understanding at will (p. 174).

It is not clear, however, why this distinction should be relevant, nor is there a clear indication in the text that this is the relevant difference. Rather, what Aristotle says both in Passage 5 and later on in the chapter seems to suggest that the relevant difference has to do with the *origin* of the failure to exercise understanding. When someone is asleep, mad, or drunk, there is a physiological explanation for why that person failed to exercise her understanding. This reading is suggested by Aristotle's remark that the disturbances like spirited reactions and sexual appetites involve the body as well (1147a15-17), and finds further support from a remark toward the end of the chapter: “How is the ignorance resolved so the akratic person recovers his knowledge? The same is true of someone drunk or asleep, and it is not special to this way of

being affected. We must hear it from the natural scientists" (1147b6-9). The analogy between the akratic and the person who is drunk, mad or asleep, is not merely a bit of hyperbole, but rather a comparison that Aristotle means to be taken quite seriously. Both the ignorance of the drunk and the ignorance of the akratic owe their origin to some disturbance that involves the body.

The fact that Aristotle thinks of akratic ignorance by analogy with the ignorance of the drunk or insane person is important. There is good evidence that if the agent is not accountable for the ignorance at issue, then the agent is not accountable for the resulting actions either, as we saw in the preceding chapter. This suggests that according to Aristotle the reason one is accountable for one's akratic actions is that one *is* accountable for the ignorance that caused them. I shall argue that this is in fact correct, and I shall begin by returning to the passage in III 5 where Aristotle discusses drunken ignorance (1113b31-1114a3, Passage 3 in Chapter 4).

The reason one is accountable for actions done in drunken ignorance, as we saw, is that the agent is himself the cause of the ignorance (*aitios tês agnoias*, III 5, 1113b30-31) and hence the origin of the action is within the agent and the agent is in control (*kurios*) of the action. By contraposition, we may infer that if the agent was not somehow responsible for his ignorant condition, he would not be responsible for the bad actions that he does as a result. And, moving to the case of akrasia, we ought to expect the same thing: if the akratic agent is *not* responsible for his akratic condition (in virtue of which he experiences excessive desires which cloud his ability to understand what he ought to do and which, in turn causes, him to act contrary to his decision), then he is *not* accountable for that action either. And indeed, later on in book VII, Aristotle comes remarkably close to saying precisely that.

After concluding his discussion of akrasia in VII 3, Aristotle turns his attention to distinguishing akrasia proper from various related conditions. While akrasia proper involves acting contrary to a decision, there are other conditions which involve acting contrary to a decision but which are not cases of akrasia *sensu stricto*. One such condition is what Aristotle calls "softness" (*malakia*). The difference between softness and *akrasia* concerns their respective objects. Akrasia is concerned specifically with the pleasures of taste and touch. Softness, by contrast, is concerned with pains. Where the akratic agent abandons his decision for the sake of obtaining pleasure, the soft agent abandons his decision for the sake of avoiding pain. In VII 7, however, Aristotle makes it clear that the reason that the soft agent is contemptible has to do in part with the fact that he cannot tolerate pains that ordinary people can. He goes on to make a comparison to *akrasia*:

6. It is similar with self-control and lack-of-self-control also. For it is not surprising if someone is overcome by strong and excessive pleasures or pains; indeed, this is pardonable, provided he struggles against them — like Theodectes' Philoctetes bitten by the snake, or Carcinus' Cercyon in the Alope, and like those who are trying to restrain their laughter and burst out laughing all at once, as happened to Xenophantus. But it is remarkable (*thaumaston*) if someone is overcome by what most people can resist, and is incapable of withstanding it, not because of his hereditary nature or because of disease (as, for instance the Scythian kings' softness is hereditary, and the female is distinguished [by softness] from the male). (1150b5-16)

Now, although Aristotle does not explicitly mention blame in this passage, it is quite clear that part of what he is doing is providing an explanation for why the akratic or soft agent is blameworthy. This is strongly implied, for example, by the reference to pardon (*sugnomê*) in the second sentence of the passage: the implicit explanandum is that people are not pardoned for akratic or soft actions, and the explanans is that there is something remarkable (*thaumaston*)

about such actions that is not true of all cases of actions in which an agent fails to act on the basis of his decision because of the influence of pleasure or pain. It is easy to think of examples of what Aristotle may have in mind here. Suppose, for example, that Karl and a travel companion are stranded in the desert with an inadequate supply of water. Out of extreme thirst he consumes more than his fair share of what's left. In this case, he did something wrong. But, depending on the severity of his thirst, Karl's action may not reflect anything particularly bad about him. Anyone in similar circumstances might have acted similarly. This case differs from the case of the akratic or the soft agent, as the examples that Aristotle gives earlier in VII 7 make clear. To illustrate softness, for example, Aristotle alludes to someone who "trails his cloak to avoid the labor and pain of lifting it" (1150b3-4). The point of this somewhat sarcastic remark seems to be that carrying one's cloak does not in fact involve any real labor or pain at all and hence the fact that someone is unwilling to do it and lets it trail instead is something remarkable (*thaumaston*) and this in part is why he is blameworthy for it.

I take it, then, that it is clear that what Aristotle has to say here bears on the main topic that I am interested in. This brings me to the main feature of the passage that I wish to call attention to, namely the qualification that Aristotle adds in the second half of the last sentence, when he says that the soft person cannot withstand what most people can, provided this failure is not due to disease or some hereditary condition. Why does Aristotle include this qualification? On this point it is useful to consider the example he gives of the difference between the male the female. The point Aristotle seems to be making is that due to natural differences between males and females, different normative standards apply to them. This is a point he makes more explicitly elsewhere. In the *Politics*, for example, we are told that "the courage of men and

women differ; For a man would be thought a coward if he had no more courage than a courageous woman" (III 4, 1277b20-22). Because the female is, on Aristotle's view, weaker by nature than the male, an instance of a female failing to be able to tolerate what men are able to tolerate would not be grounds to blame her since it is something she is not in control of. Presumably, his remark about the Scythian kings admits of the same kind of explanation. The reason that it would not be appropriate to blame the Scythian kings for their weakness has to do with the fact that their condition is caused by a disease or an hereditary condition. The point Aristotle is making, then, is precisely what we ought to expect him to make, given my interpretation of Aristotle's remarks about drunken ignorance in III 5. And this strongly suggests the reason that the akratic agent, in normal cases, is accountable for his actions has to do with the fact that he is accountable for his akratic disposition.

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It is time to take stock. We began with the question of why one is accountable for one's non-deliberative actions, and to answer this, I focused specifically on the case of akratic actions. What we have seen is that one is accountable for one's akratic actions because they are caused in a certain way by ignorance that the agent is accountable for. The reason one is accountable for that ignorance, in turn, is that one is accountable for the disposition that foreseeably caused it. The question that remains is: why is the akratic agent accountable for her akratic disposition? I think that one of the aims of III 5 is to answer this question.

To see this we need to consider what Aristotle goes on to say in the text immediately following his remarks about culpable ignorance in that chapter. There he points out that in some cases the agent is responsible for his ignorance because his ignorance is a result of inattention.

Aristotle goes on to take up an objection: "but what if one is of such a sort as not to take care?" (1114a3-4). The objection here is that if the inattention that caused the ignorance is itself part of the person's character, it is not under the agent's control. Aristotle responds by denying that the fact that the ignorance is part of the person's character implies that it is not under his control:

7. Still, he is himself responsible for becoming this sort of person [i.e. the sort of person not to take care] because he has lived carelessly. Similarly, an individual is responsible for being unjust because he has cheated, and for being intemperate, because he has passed his time in drinking and the like; for each type of activity produces the corresponding sort of person. This is clear from those who train for any contest or action, since they continually practice the appropriate activities. Only a totally insensible person would not know that a given type of activity is the source of the corresponding state; hence if someone does what he knows will make him unjust, he is willingly unjust. (1114a4-13)

Notice that here Aristotle is making a general point. States of character in general — vices and virtues, but, presumably, quasi-vices and quasi-virtues also like akrasia and enkrateia respectively — are caused by the agent's own activities. This claim is meant to imply, somehow, that the agent is accountable for acquiring those states of character. But what is the principle that links these two claims? One possibility would be this:

(1) If *x* is caused by *A*'s actions, then *A* is accountable for *x*.

This claim is obviously too broad. First, if *x* is not a foreseeable consequence of *A*'s actions it does not seem that A is accountable for it. And Aristotle seems to acknowledge this when he says that "[o]nly a totally insensible person would not know that a given type of activity is the source of the corresponding state." The point there seems to be that a bad state of character *is* a

foreseeable consequence of bad actions. To avoid this problem, we might propose instead of (1) the following:

(2) If *x* is a foreseeable consequence of *A*'s actions, then *A* is accountable for *x*.

This again seems to be too broad. Suppose, for example, that *x* is a foreseeable consequence of some action that *A* performs, but *A* performs the action at issue involuntarily.[16] In this case, Aristotle would deny that *A* is culpable for *x*. Hence, the principle must be something like (3):

(3) If *x* is a foreseeable consequence of some action(s) that *A* is accountable for, then *A* is accountable for *x*.

If we read this principle into Passage 7, then the point Aristotle would be making is that, in general, one's states of character are the foreseeable result of actions for which one is accountable.

Why does Aristotle believe this? To answer this let us consider one of the examples that he himself gives: someone who becomes intemperate as a result of habitual, excessive drinking. Aristotle is clear that part of the reason that the behavior of this agent is blameworthy is that the agent knows that spending his time in this way will produce a bad state of character, but, despite that knowledge, decides to perform the action anyway. On the basis of what we have seen in the first half of this essay, it is quite easy to see why the agent would be accountable for these actions. He is accountable for them because they reflect a failing of his practical intellect — his capacity to take things as reasons for acting. He did not place sufficient weight in the pernicious consequences he knew his actions would have.

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[16] For example, food-poisoning is a foreseeable consequence of eating a spoiled food, but if *A* is blamelessly ignorant of the fact that the food she is serving to her dinner guests is spoiled, it does not seem that she is blameworthy for them getting food-poisoning.

Understanding Passage 7 in this way suggests the following way of answering the question of why one is accountable for non-deliberative actions. Non-deliberative actions, although they are not a direct result of the agent's exercise of his capacity for practical reason, are nonetheless characteristically *indirect* results of an exercise of that capacity. They are the indirect results because they are caused by dispositions that the agent acquires as a result of his deliberate actions. And that they are connected to the agent's deliberative capacity in this indirect way explains why the agent is accountable for them. In this respect, the condition of the ordinary akratic differs from that of the Scythian kings that Aristotle mentioned in Passage 6. The Scythian kings have a soft disposition, but the reason they are not blameworthy for that disposition is that it does not reflect a failing of their capacity for practical reason in the way that the condition of the typical akratic does. Rather, their condition is simply hereditary.

One consequence of this picture, is that Aristotle holds that one acquires one's states of characters at least in part as a result of actions that one performs once one has acquired the capacity for deliberation. This idea has been doubted by many commentators, though, and hence I want to conclude by briefly considering an objection to this account on that basis.

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It is often thought that, according to Aristotle, what character states one acquires is a matter that is entirely determined by the habituation that one is subject to as a child. If this is right, then it does not seem that the agent himself is responsible for his states of character. If this is right, there is an apparent tension between Aristotle's theory of moral development and his remarks in Passage 7, as I have interpreted them. This point is made, for example, by Bernard Williams (1986), who writes:

> Aristotle should not have believed that in the most basic respects, at least, people were responsible for their characters. He gives an account of moral development in terms of habituation and internalization that leaves little room for practical reason to alter radically the objectives that a grown-up person has acquired. (p. 38).

The basis that Williams gives here for thinking that one is not responsible for one's state of character is the supposed fact that one is not capable of changing one's state of character. It is true that Aristotle seems to think that for genuinely vicious people character change is unlikely if not impossible. It is not, however, true that Aristotle thinks that one's state of character in general is unchangeable once it has been acquired. That is not what I want to focus on here, though. For now I will grant Williams that one cannot change one's state of character once it has been fully formed. The question I want to focus on is whether this — i.e. the absence of the possibility of change — in and of itself implies that one is not in control of what states of character one has.

Aristotle himself explicitly addresses this question in *NE* III 5, shortly after arguing that one is responsible for one's state of character in Passage 7. After asserting that "the claim that the

person who does injustice wishes not to be unjust or that the self-indulgent person wishes not to be self-indulgent is unreasonable"[17] (1114a11-12), Aristotle explains himself as follows:

8. This does not mean, however, that if he is unjust and wishes to stop, he will thereby stop and be just. For neither does a sick person recover his health [simply by wishing]; nonetheless, he is sick voluntarily, by living in an un-self-controlled way and disobeying the doctors, if that was how it happened. (1114a11-16)

Aristotle's point here directly contradicts William's assumption that if the agent cannot change his state of character, he is not in control of that condition of character. Aristotle's point is, rather, that the agent controls his condition of character by controlling the actions that foreseeably lead to the acquisition of his state of character. This point, then, is wholly of a piece with the idea that Aristotle enunciated just a few lines earlier when he argued that one is responsible for one's states of character by virtue of being responsible for the actions that produce that state of character.

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[17] The Greek reads: ἔτι δ' ἄλογον τὸν ἀδικοῦντα μὴ βούλεσθαι ἄδικον εἶναι ἢ τὸν ἀκολασταίνοντα ἀκόλαστον. My construal of this sentence differs from Irwin's in two important respects. The first concerns the phrase μὴ βούλεσθαι. Irwin takes μή to simply negate βούλεσθαι, "not to wish." By contrast, I take the μή to be adherescent — not simply negating βούλεσθαι, but giving it the opposite meaning — and translate "to wish not [to be]." While ordinarily one would expect an οὐκ for this sense, there is very good evidence that Aristotle often uses μή βούλεσθαι in this way. See, for example: *EE* 1230b32, *NE* 1146a25, 1167b15, *HA* 620a3, *Politics* 1286b30. The apparent irregularity of this use of μή can perhaps be explained by reference to the fact that the two words, μή and βούλεσθαι, are meant to be taken closely together (See Smythe §2697).

Second, my construal disagrees with Irwin's regarding the question of what ἄλογον is meant to modify. Irwin's translation reads: "Further, it is unreasonable for someone doing injustice not to wish to be unjust, or for someone doing intemperate action not to wish to be intemperate." Thus he takes ἄλογον to modify τὸν ἀδικοῦντα. The problem with this reading is that it seems false to say that it is unreasonable for someone who is doing injustice to wish to not be unjust. In his notes, Irwin suggests another possible construal that avoids this problem: "Moreover, it is unreasonable [to expect] someone doing injustice not to wish to be unjust…" Here ἄλογον modifies the whole proposition stated in τὸν...ἄκολαστον. However, Irwin calls this construal less probable and although he does not say why, one may surmise that it has to do, at least in part, with the fact that to get it he must supply the verb 'to expect' which is not found anywhere in the context. Moreover, it also seems to say something false. My own construal agrees with Irwin's second proposal in taking ἄλογον to modify the whole proposition that follows, but takes Aristotle to simply be saying that the proposition is itself unreasonable (hence I do not supply 'to expect' or any other verb).

The reason that Williams' neglects this point, presumably, is that he assumes, as many other commentators have as well, that whether one acquires the right states of character or not is dependent entirely on the conditions of one's upbringing — conditions that the agent himself does not have direct control over. Call this view *Upbringing Determinism* (or *UD*, for short). Williams' thought, then, is that Aristotle's account of responsibility for character cannot be squared with UD, and this is a problem because Aristotle endorses UD. But does Aristotle really endorse UD? I shall argue that he does not.

The reason that many commentators have thought that Aristotle endorses UD is that they endorse a certain conception of habituation according to which habituation is primarily a passive process: being habituated is not something that one *does*, or even does *to oneself*, but rather, it is something that is done *to* one. One way in which one may be led to endorse this view of habitation is if one thinks of the process by analogy with training a non-rational animal, e.g. a household pet. Training one's dog to sit on command, fetch the newspaper, and so on are fairly plausible candidates for instances of habituation: one uses punishments and rewards so as to train the dog to have the right kinds of desires and behave accordingly; so too, one may think that ethical habituation is carried out simply by receiving the proper rewards and punishments so as to train the non-rational part of the soul to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli. Some version of the view has been defended by a great many commentators. As early as 1866, for example, Alexander Grant characterized Aristotle's view of habituation as "mechanical" by which he apparently meant that habituation is a process by which the agent is subjected to various forms of treatment which "mechanically" produce certain states of character (p. 482).[18]

[18] Cf. Stewart (1892, pp. 170-171).

Call this view *the Mechanical Reading*. This reading, although rejected by most commentators today, still receives sympathy from some.[19]

Now I think there are strong reasons for rejecting the Mechanical Reading, as I shall discuss shortly, but first, it is worth pointing out that although the mechanical view may lend itself to Upbringing Determinism, it does not straightforwardly imply it. To see what I mean, consider an example. A body builder has a certain bodily condition by virtue of performing certain exercises in a certain way and following a certain diet. The process by which the bodybuilder's body acquires the condition it does is clearly a mechanical one, in Grant's sense. Nonetheless, it does not follow that the bodybuilder himself cannot be credited with at least partial responsibility for his condition. Quite the contrary, the bodybuilder is partly responsible for the condition of his body because he is responsible for performing the activities that foreseeably produce that condition; this is why it makes sense to commend athletes for their physical accomplishments. So too, even if ethical habituation is a purely mechanical process, it may still be the case that the agent himself is partly responsible for that process if it takes place through activities that the agent himself voluntarily performs. Hence, even if one grants to the proponents of the mechanical view that the process of habituation does not involve reason and simply involves mechanically training the non-rational part of the soul to have certain desiderative or emotional responses, it does not follow that the agent is not responsible for his condition of character.

Now one way that one might infer from the Mechanical Reading that Aristotle accepts UD, of course, would be by means of the additional premise that the habituation process at issue

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[19] See, for example, Curzer (2012, p. 317) and Moss (2012, pp. 171ff.)

occurs when the person being habituated is of such an age as not to be responsible for her behavior. That habituation is a process that occurs in early childhood is often assumed by commentators without argumentation.[20] Aristotle is quite clear however, that this is not how he thinks of the process of habituation. In fact, he explicitly disavows it. In the final chapter of the *NE*, X 9, Aristotle segues to a discussion of politics by explicitly calling attention to the fact that the process of habituation necessary for becoming good does not end when one is a child: "Presumably, however, it is not enough if [citizens] get the correct upbringing and attention when they are young; rather, they must continue the same practices and be habituated to them when they become men" (1180a1-3).[21] This is not a one-off remark. Throughout his discussion of habituation, although Aristotle repeatedly calls attention to the importance of good habituation "from youth" (*ek neos*, i.e. "beginning in youth")[22] he is clear that the process does not also *end* in youth.[23] He says, for example, as we have already seen, that becoming just involves doing just actions. Presumably Aristotle does not have in mind an child doing just actions after being commanded to do so by his mother. Rather, the natural way of understanding him would be to take him to be referring to the behavior of an adult. This is even more clear in the case of other virtues, for example, courage. As we saw, Aristotle explicitly indicates that becoming courageous requires being in circumstances such as to require courage — primarily, circumstances of battle.

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[20] An example of someone who seems to assume that habituation takes place in childhood is Jörn Müller (2014) who in formulating the very worry I am addressing here speaks of the subject of habituation exclusively as a child (p. 94).

[21] Donini (2010, p. 153) asserts that the view that habituation is not completed in childhood "lacks any textual evidence to support it." This passage shows that he is wrong.

[22] II 1, 1103b24, II 2, 1104b11, X 9, 1179b31

[23] Donini (*ibid*., pp. 153-154) apparently takes these remarks to imply that habituation occurs in childhood only. This is very puzzling given, as I already pointed out, that Aristotle explicitly asserts that although the process must begin in youth, it is not completed in youth.

Since serving in the military is not something that children typically do (either in ancient Athens or today), it follows straightaway that part of the process of habituation required for cultivating courage occurs in adulthood. Similar things could be said about the other virtues.[24]

I take it, then, that the assumption that habituation occurs exclusively in early childhood is simply false. The is one worry that remains, however, before we can comfortably reject UD. The first has to do with the role that the lawgiver plays in causing his citizens to develop the right states of character. The defender of the view that Aristotle endorses UD may accept that habituation is a process that occurs at least partly in adulthood, but nonetheless she may maintain that the person responsible for this part of the process is not the agent himself, but the lawgiver in the *polis* the agent finds himself in. This reading may be thought to find support from what Aristotle says in X 9. Part of how Aristotle bridges the gap between the foregoing ethical treatise and the treatment of politics to follow is by emphasizing the importance of the lawgiver in bringing about virtue of character in his citizens. And in the very passage from X 9 that I quoted before (1180a1-3), he employs an analogy between the role that the parent plays in habituation during youth and the role that the lawgiver must play with respect to adults: because habituation is not complete in childhood it is necessary for the lawgiver to play the role corresponding to the parent for the adult citizens of the polis.

There are two points I wish to make in response to this. The first is that the view that laws and customs of the community one grows up in make a great deal of difference for one's states of character does not commit one to UD. One may think, for example, that although one's

[24] It is hard to imagine a young child practicing the actions characteristic of magnificence (*megaloprepeia*), for example. Young children do not typically have the means to host tasteful feasts or to sponsor theatrical performances.

community makes a great deal of difference, it is not *sufficient* to determine one's character. This view is consistent with rejecting UD. In fact, I think there is very good evidence that this is what Aristotle thinks: like any reasonable person, he recognizes that one's circumstances can affect one's character, but he does not think that one's circumstances, at least normally, *completely determine* one's character. To see this, let me to return briefly to the Mechanical Reading, which, I have granted until now.

Now, the lawgiver plays a role in bringing about virtue of character in his polis' citizens, primarily, by means of rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior. If the Mechanical Reading is right, then this is plausibly all that is required for bringing about good states of character. However, as most commentators today accept, this is not all that habituation requires. For an agent to be virtuous, according to Aristotle, that agent must have practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), which is an intellectual virtue and which involves grasping explanations of why things are good or bad. If the mechanical reading is right, it is hard to see how this understanding could come about. Hence, most commentators have concluded, habituation also includes an intellectual component. There is a large question about how precisely this intellectual aspect of habituation is to be understood, but, I think, so long as one accepts that there is an intellectual component, it is clear that the agent himself must play a role in bringing about his states of character.

To see this, consider a case of purely intellectual learning. Learning may require a teacher, and when one has successfully acquired some expertise on the basis of teaching, the teacher is partly responsible for bringing that knowledge about. But, as anyone who has spent much time teaching or being taught knows, learning also requires the effort of the person being

taught. Someone who earns a college degree, for example, may owe her knowledge in part to the efforts of her professors, but she is also partly responsible for the learning that she has done. If she had not expended any effort trying to learn the material, then her professors' attempts to teach her would not have been successful. This is why it makes sense to congratulate someone who has just graduated from college. Graduating from college is supposed to represent an intellectual accomplishment on the part of the graduate, not just on the part of her teachers. Since acquiring *phronêsis* is a considerable intellectual accomplishment, the learning necessary on the part of the subject must require considerable effort. And since acquiring *phronêsis* is a necessary condition for acquiring virtue, it follows that acquiring virtue must require considerable effort on the part of the subject and hence the subject will be at least partly responsible for the state of character that she acquires.

But what about the acquisition of bad states of character? After all, pursuing the analogy with intellectual learning a bit further, although earning a college degree may constitute an accomplishment on the part of the graduate, someone who has no access to higher education cannot reasonably be blamed for failing to earn a college degree. So too, Aristotle seems to assume that even people who have bad states of character are responsible for them. But what if such a person simply grew up in a place where the right sorts of teachers or habituators were not present? This kind of objection is often made by commentators who want to get from Aristotle a more-or-less complete theory of moral responsibility of the sort that might represent a genuine alternative to the theories of more recent philosophers. I think, however, that Aristotle is not in the business of offering any such theory and hence my response to this objection will be somewhat deflationary. I think that Aristotle would grant that there are some socio-political

environments that make the acquisition of virtue or the avoidance of bad character states virtually impossible. I also think he would grant that it would not be proper to blame someone from such circumstances for the bad character states that she acquires as a result. However, I do not think that the fact that Aristotle would grant these claims presents any difficulty for his view as presented in *NE* III 5. Recall that the *NE* has a *practical* aim. Hence there are a great many questions that may be connected to the topics he discusses which it would not be necessary for him to deal with. Questions of this sort are among of the best examples. Aristotle does seem to think that, at least given the social and political realities of Greece at his time, the vast majority of people living there — and certainly the audience of the *Nicomachean Ethics* — did have the possibility of avoiding bad character states. Hence, there is little practical reason to delve into the very rare exceptions to this. Aristotle's remark in III 5 that we are responsible for our own character states should be understood in this light. He is restricting his attention to the kinds of people that he or one of his students is likely to encounter in everyday life, and he is saying that those people typically bear enough causal responsibility for their states of character as to be accountable for them, both in the good case and the bad case.

On this point it is worth returning to the analogy with intellectual learning one last time. Suppose a teacher at a prestigious prep school tries to motivate her pupils by telling them that their future educational turnouts — good or bad — are up to them; they can go to a good college, get a good education and reap all the benefits that result, or not, and in either case they themselves are responsible. It would be entirely malapropos if one of her students were to object that someone who suffers from a severe learning disability or who comes from an environment where decent primary and secondary educational opportunities are simply not available cannot

be responsible for failing to get a decent college education. This claim may be true, but it is beside the point. These considerations do not apply to any of the people that the teacher is addressing. So too, I take it that Aristotle makes the commonsensical assumption that most people (or at least most Greeks of his day)[25] have the power to avoid bad states of character, and hence they may be blamed for those states of character when they do in fact acquire them.[26]

5. Conclusion

We are now in a position to answer the questions that we started out with. First, the reason that normal adults are characteristically accountable for their voluntary actions is that their voluntary actions *usually* reflect an exercise of their capacity for practical reason. There are different ways that they do this, however. When an agent acts on the basis of decision, his action itself is done on the basis of taking certain things as reasons for acting. In other cases, the connection between the capacity and the action is less direct. In the case of non-deliberative actions for which the agent is accountable, the action is caused by a disposition that the agent is accountable for acquiring. The reason she is accountable for acquiring those dispositions, moreover, is that the dispositions at issue are foreseeably caused by actions that the agent has done in the past on the basis of decision.

The picture that we find in the *NE*, then, agrees with the *EE* in that it holds that all actions for which one is accountable involve the distinctively human capacity for practical reason. They

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[25] Barbarians, perhaps, fare less well. See, e.g., the remark that "beastly" (*theriôdês*) conditions, although rare, are "mostly found among barbarians" (VII 1, 1145a30-31).
[26] A similar point is made by Donini (2010, pp. 151-152).

disagree, however, on how precisely this works. I conclude, next, by briefly considering some of the main differences between two accounts.

Conclusion.

Although the *NE* agrees with the *EE* as far as the general point that to be accountable for an action that action must be under the agent's rational control, the two works understand rational control in very different ways. In this respect, the *EE* picture is much tidier than the *NE* one. In the *EE* this idea is neatly summed up by appealing to *dianoia* ("thought"): all voluntary actions are done on the basis of *dianoia* and and all actions done on the basis of *dianoia* are done on the basis of taking things as reasons for acting. In the *NE*, the picture is more complicated. There, while the voluntary actions of fully-developed adults do characteristically reflect exercises of the agent's rational capacities, they do not all do this in the same way. Actions done on the basis of decision — the focal case of controlled and accountable action — directly reflect an exercise of the agent's deliberative capacity. Voluntary, non-deliberative actions characteristically do so indirectly. Aristotle holds a view of how states of character come about according to which, in ordinary cases, the subject of those states bears considerable responsibility for them by virtue of deliberative actions that she performed that foreseeably resulted in the formation of those states. Thus, a non-deliberative action — for example, an akratic action— although it may not reflect the agent's considered judgements at the time of acting, nevertheless reflects the deliberate choices that the agent made in the past. And it is this feature of these actions in virtue of which the agent is accountable for them.

Thus, to the extent that simplicity is a theoretical virtue, the *EE* account might be thought, on the basis of this picture, to be superior to the *NE* counterpart. I think, however, for philosophical reasons, that this conclusion would be a mistake. To the extent that the *NE*

distinguishes between different ways in which an action may exhibit rational control, I think it contains an important insight. It is true, I think, that rational control comes in degrees and this fact is important from a standpoint of accountability. Thus while the *NE* account is more complex, I think this increased complexity reflects a development in Aristotle's thinking for the better.[27]

All of this suggests that the three works discussed in this project all belong to a single continuous line of philosophical development. The idea that voluntariness and accountability involve rational control is already present in the *Timaeus*, but there this idea is spelled out in such a way as to yield the counterintuitive result that vice and vicious actions are involuntary. Aristotle, when he wrote the *EE*, wanted to preserve the key insight, while avoiding the counter-intuitive consequences. He did this by defining the voluntary not in terms of *nous* ("intellect"), as Timaeus had, but, in terms of the broader concept of *dianoia*. Aristotle later came to realize that this account was somewhat too ambitious. It is not plausible to think that all an adult human's voluntary actions involve this capacity[28] and, at any rate, different actions exhibit rational control

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[27] It is worth mentioning briefly another important point on which I think the *NE* account is superior despite some appearances to the contrary. In *EE* II 8, Aristotle clearly recognizes cases of psychological compulsion — cases in which an action counts as compelled and involuntary by virtue of facts about the desire that gave rise to the action (1225a2 36). The *NE* III 1 discussion of forced action, by contrast, seems to rule out the possibility of psychological compulsion since it requires that in order for an action to count as forced, it must originate in something external to the agent (III 1, 1110a1). This, again, may be thought to be a point in favor of the *EE* account, since the phenomenon of psychological compulsion is both real and important. I think, however, that on the basis of the picture that I argued for above, we are not in a position to see that the *NE* account on this point is again superior. In the *NE* the connection between voluntariness and accountability is more attenuated than in the *EE*. The reason that, in the *EE*, Aristotle concludes that certain actions are psychologically compelled is precisely because he is attracted to the idea that the agent is not culpable for them. In the *NE*, by contrast, the fact that these actions are voluntary is not meant to imply that the agent is culpable for them. Voluntariness is only one parameter to be considered when one is determining an agent's culpability. Considerations of voluntariness do not excuse psychologically compelled actions, but other considerations, I think would on Aristotle's view. Hence, I think that, on this point again, the *NE* account is attractively more complex than the *EE* account.

[28] As I briefly discussed above (p. 76, n. 61).

to different degrees. He remedied this by, on the one hand, distancing the question of when an agent is accountable for an action from the question whether an action is voluntary, and, on the other hand, developing a view of the role that decision plays in action that explains why one is accountable for the actions that one is. I strongly suspect that line of development presented here could usefully be extended, so to speak, both to the right and to the left: to the left so as to include defenses of the Asymmetry Thesis in the earlier Platonic dialogues, and to the right so as to include discussions of the voluntary among later philosophers within the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, for example, Plotinus and Alexander of Aphrodisias. That, of course, is a task for a larger project.

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