THE VOLUNTARY AND THE INVOLUNTARY IN ARISTOTLE'S NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

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In what follows I shall be concerned with Aristotle's voluntary/involuntary distinction as it is presented in the Nicomachean Ethics. In particular, I will first point out that Aristotle has several criteria for making the distinction. Second, I will suggest that, despite the deficiencies of these criteria, Aristotle does offer, though implicitly, an account of the voluntary/involuntary distinction which is correct at least in outline.

I.

In III. i. Aristotle draws the voluntary/involuntary distinction in several ways. Later, in V. viii., he does so again, though somewhat differently.

The First Criterion. Aristotle's first characterization of the voluntary/involuntary distinction seems straightforward and uncontroversial. He says: "Those things, then, are thought involuntary, which take place under compulsion or owing to ignorance . . ." (1110a).[1] What Aristotle means by "things" here is implied in the previous paragraph: ". . . virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed, on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes also pity . . ." (1109b). Thus:

Criterion 1: Something is involuntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) it takes place either under compulsion or owing to ignorance.

Something is voluntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) it takes place neither under compulsion nor owing to ignorance.

In 1110b Aristotle defines "compulsory actions": "What sort of acts, then, should be called compulsory? We answer that without qualification actions are so

when the cause is in the external circumstances and the agent contributes nothing." And he goes on to say: "The compulsory, then, seems to be that whose moving principle is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing." Both of these definitions, however, apply to actions. Since Aristotle does not provide a definition of "compulsory passions," it must be assumed that his above definitions apply to passions as well as to actions. In lieu of making this assumption, Aristotle's definition of the compulsory is incomplete, since we need to know what kinds of thing may be compelled in order to know what it is to be compelled.

To say that a cause is "external" to the person or "outside" of him is to imply a spatial separation of the person and the cause. It seems easy to understand what this amounts to in the case of an overt action. To use Aristotle's example in the beginning of III. i.: One is carried somewhere by other people. The other people, then, whose bodies are spatially separate from the one person's body, are a cause of his being carried off. Yet, more is required for the person to be compelled. The compelled person cannot also be a cause of his action; he "contributes nothing." In other words, for one to be compelled to be carried off, he cannot assist in any way those who are carrying him off. For example, he cannot hang on. Thus, it seems that for Aristotle:

Definition 1: A person is compelled by x to do or to feel something iff (a) x is spatially separate from that person's body, (b) x causes that person's action or feeling, and (c) that person does not cause his action or feeling.

Regarding the second condition of the involuntary, to say that an action takes place "owing to" or "by reason of" ignorance is, for Aristotle, to say that one's ignorance causes his action. The following passage implies this:

> . . . but the term "involuntary" tends to be used not if a man is ignorant of what is to his advantage--for it is not mistaken purpose that causes involuntary action (it leads rather to wickedness), nor ignorance of the universal (for that men are blamed), but ignorance of particulars, i.e. of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned. (1110b)

Aristotle goes on to specify what these "particulars" may be: "A man may be ignorant, then, of who he is,

what he is doing, what or whom he is acting on, and sometimes also what (e.g. what instrument) he is doing it with, and to what end (e.g. he may think his act will conduce to someone's safety), and how he is doing it (e.g. whether gently or violently)" (1111a). He immediately goes on to say that "the man who was ignorant of any of these is thought to have acted involuntarily," while if he is ignorant of all of them, then he is "mad." Thus for Arsitotle:

Definition 2: A person acts or feels by reason of ignorance iff (a) his ignorance causes his action or feeling, and (b) his ignorance is of some, but not all, "particulars."

Aristotle's remark that ". . . of all these ('particulars') no one could be ignorant unless he were mad . . ." (1111a), may be taken to imply that the man who is "mad" does not act involuntarily by reason of ignorance and, consequently, may be understood to be a restriction on the scope of the actions and passions which could be involuntary. That is, Aristotle indicates here that it is not all non-compelled actions (and feelings, too) that can be involuntary by reason of ignorance, but only those in which the agent could have had knowledge of the circumstances of his action. It follows that, since one of the circumstances of an action includes the aim or consequences of it (see 1111a-5), any animal incapable of foresight is also incapable of involuntary action by reason of ignorance. But, being incapable of foresight, it would also be incapable of acting voluntarily. The "mad" man, as well as non-human animals, is such an animal. Hence, Aristotle is here restricting the scope of the voluntary/involuntary distinction to human animals with a capacity to know all of the circumstances of their actions.[2] Note, however, that this restriction does not apply to those actions or feelings which are involuntary solely because they are compelled, since in this case one's knowledge or lack of it is irrelevant to its being involuntary. So, the above restriction is also restricted in its scope.

A consequence of the above restriction is that non-compelled involuntary actions admit of degree of involuntariness. In 1111a25 Aristotle implies that children may act voluntarily. Since they do have some foresight, though not as much as adults, it would seem that they are less capable of acting voluntarily or involuntarily by reason of ignorance than are adults. When they do act completely voluntarily, knowing all of the circumstance of their action which they are capable

of knowing, they act less voluntarily than another, in similar circumstances, but with a greater capacity to understand these circumstances. So, in this sense, the voluntary/involuntary distinction admits of degree, varying directly with the amount of one's capacity to know, which itself varies with innate mental abilities (compare the human being and the cat or the exceptional and the moronic) and with practice (compare the child and the adult).

Problems With The First Criterion. Definition 2 suffers from an ambiguity which becomes clear only when Aristotle's examples are considered. That is, condition (b) seems to mean that what one may be ignorant of when one acts by reason of ignorance are particular matters of fact, the totality of which constitutes the "circumstances of the action." But not all of the examples which Aristotle gives of cases of acting by reason of ignorance are examples of cases in which one is ignorant of particular matters of fact. The relevant passage here is:

> But of what he is doing a man might be ignorant, as for instance people say "it slipped out of their mouths as they were speaking," or "they did not know it was a secret" . . . or a man might say he "let it go off when he merely wanted to show its working," as the man did with the catapult. Again, one might think one's son was an enemy, as Merope did, or that a pointed spear had a button on it, or that a stone was pumice-stone; or one might want to touch a man, as people do in sparring, and really wound him. (1111a)

To fail to know that "it was a secret," that "one's son was (not) an enemy," "that a pointed spear had a button on it," or that "a stone was pumice-stone" is ignorance in the sense of "failure to make a correct identification." One mistakenly identifies this stone as pumice-stone.

But cases in which "it slipped out of their mouths as they were speaking," "he 'let it go off when he merely wanted to show its working,'" or cases in which one "want(s) to touch a man . . . and really wound(s) him" are all cases in which there is no apparent failure to make correct identifications. Rather, these are transparent cases of doing something accidentally. They involve a failure in acting according to plan or intention, not a failure in thinking. Such cases do, however, involve a kind of ignorance, that which is a failure of having knowledge of how to do some particular action.

Perhaps Aristotle fails to distinguish these two senses of "ignorant" because in both cases the ignorance concerns something particular. In "ignorance-that" one is ignorance of a particular matter of fact, in the sense that he makes a mistake in thinking that it is other than it really is. In "ignorance-how" one is ignorant of how to do a particular action, in the sense that he fails to do the particular action which he intended to do.

Condition (b) in definition 2 obviously requires the person who acts involuntarily by reason of ignorance to be "ignorant" in the above first sense of the word. That is, such a person has "ignorance of particulars, i.e. of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned" (1110b). It follows that certain of Aristotle's examples are ill-chosen. But, more importantly, condition (b) raises the problem of why actions done accidentally, i.e. contrary to intention, are excusable. For, if definition 2 is accepted, actions done accidentally cannot be excused on the ground that they are involuntary actions. But since we do, in fact, excuse actions done contrary to intention for the reason that they are involuntary, Aristotle's definition of acting or feeling by reason of ignorance is untenable.

A more general criticism turns on the sense of "or" which is used in the first criterion. It is the exclusive sense of "or." That is, an involuntary action, according to the first criterion, cannot both be compelled and done by reason of ignorance. The reason for this is simple: if an involuntary action is done by reason of ignorance, then one's ignorance is a cause of the action; and if one's ignorance is a cause of the action, then the person who is ignorant of certain particulars is a cause of the action; but, if the action is compelled, then the person "contributes nothing," does not cause the action. To maintain that an involuntary action is both compelled and done by reason of ignorance, therefore, would be to imply that the person both causes and does not cause the action. It follows, that a person cannot be compelled by reason of his ignorance of particulars, and that one cannot act by reason of ignorance because he is compelled to so act.

The second consequence, that one cannot act by reason of ignorance because one is compelled so to act, is false.[3] For example, consider the hypnotist who, unbeknownst to a subject, places the latter under hypnosis. The subject is then instructed to disbelieve, after the session, the existence of red lights. As a consequence, the following day the subject proceeds to

run all the red traffic lights on his way to work. Now his action of running the red signals is done by reason of ignorance; it is not that he thinks he should run red lights that he does so; it is, rather, that he runs them because he does not believe that they are really there! And he does not believe that they are really there because he has been compelled to disbelieve their reality. His action of running the red lights is compelled, since his ignorance of their reality, which has caused him to run them, has been compelled. Yet, such a case could not make sense if Aristotle were correct in maintaining that involuntary actions may be done either by reason of ignorance or by compulsion, but not both. Yet it is perfectly intelligible.

The upshot of this criticism is, of course, that something is mistaken about the first criterion. Either definition 1 or definition 2 or both are unacceptable.

What generates this difficulty, I think, is the excessively stringent condition (c) in definition 1, i.e. the claim that for an action to be compelled "the agent contributes nothing" to it. At least, this is paradoxical; at most, it is self-contradictory. For how could an agent, qua agent, fail to "contribute" something to the action? Since no agent, qua agent, can fail to exercise agency, no agent can act involuntarily due to compulsion.

But, perhaps what Aristotle means is that a person, who has the capacity to be an agent and is a sometime agent, may act involuntarily due to compulsion if, when compelled, he is not exercising his capacity to act? This in unintelligible.

More intelligible is the view that Aristotle is saying in all compelled actions the person compelled is someone who does not act at all, but is acted upon. On this interpretation, (c) in definition 1 is to be understood to mean that the person compelled is not the efficient cause of the action, though he may be its material cause.

But this view is not consistent with what Aristotle says, namely, that one can act under compulsion: "On some actions praise indeed is not bestowed, but pardon is, when one does what he ought not under pressure which overstrains human nature and which no one could withstand. But some acts, perhaps, we cannot be forced to do, but ought rather to face death after the most terrible sufferings . . ." (1110a) (see also 1110b10).

The problem, then, is that if the compelled person acts, he "contributes" something to the involuntary action, and there will, in fact, be no involuntary actions; but, on the other hand, that the compelled person never acts contradicts what Aristotle says above, as well as the fact that people do sometimes act under compulsion. The solution is that, in some sense, the compelled person, at least sometimes, does "contribute" something to the involuntary action.

That a person does "contribute" something even to actions which he is compelled to undergo can be recognized easily if we return to Aristotle's example at 1110a3: Person A is "carried off" by persons B and C. Now the mere fact that A is carried off by B and C does not excuse A from responsibility for the action. The fact that he is carried off by B and C means only that the first two conditions in definition 1 are met. At this point three alternatives are open to A: (a) the "Patty Hearst" alternative: A assists in his being carried off, he "hangs on" to B and C; (b) the "Abbie Hoffman" alternative: A resists being carried off; (c) the "Rosa Parks" alternative: A neither resists being carried off, nor does he assist B and C; he simply acquieces. But whether A assists B and C, resists them, or acquieces to them has an effect on the quality of the action of being carried off. That is, if A resists being carried off, B and C will not carry him off in the same way that they would carry him off if he were to assist being carried off or if he were to acquiece. For example, there is obviously a great difference between carrying off Abbie Hoffman while he is acquiecing, and carrying him off while he is resisting. The difference is of the same kind as that between striding and shuffling. The latter are different ways of doing one kind of action, namely walking, and the former are different ways of doing another kind of action, carrying. Since A must either resist, assist, or acquiece, he will always have an influence on how B and C carry him off. In this sense, he will "contribute to" the involuntary action which he is compelled to undergo, since a complete description of a particular action includes a description of how it is performed.

Thus, it is just false that "without qualification" "the agent (or person) contributes nothing" to compulsory actions. Just what qualifications are necessary, however, do need to be spelled out. And this is precisely what Aristotle fails to do.

The Second Criterion. Another criterion for distinguishing the voluntary from the involuntary is to be found in 1110a. The crucial passage is:

> But with regard to the things that are done from fear of greater evils or for some noble object (e.g. if a tyrant were to order one to do something base, having one's parents and children in his power, and if one did the action they were to be saved, but otherwise be put to death), it may be debated whether such actions are involuntary or voluntary. Something of the sort happens also with regard to the throwing of goods overboard in a storm; for in the abstract no one throws goods away voluntarily, but on condition of its securing the safety of himself and his crew any sensible man does so. Such actions, then, are mixed, but are more like voluntary actions; for they are worthy of choice at the time when they are done, and an end of an action is relative to the occasion. Both the terms, then, "voluntary" and "involuntary," must be used with reference to the moment of action. Now the man acts voluntarily; for the principle that moves the instrumental parts of the body in such actions is in him, and the things of which the moving principle is in a man himself are in his power to do or not to do. Such actions, therefore, are voluntary, but in the abstract perhaps involuntary; for no one would choose any such act in itself.

In this passage Aristotle introduces the concept of choice into his account of the voluntary/involuntary distinction. To say that actions done as means of securing a good or "noble object" or as means of preventing an evil greater than the action itself are "like voluntary actions, for they are worthy of choice at the time when they are done" is to imply that if an action is voluntary, then it is worthy of choice. And this is to say that being worthy of choice is a necessary condition of an action being voluntary. Likewise, to say that "such actions" are "perhaps involuntary, for no one would choose any such act in itself" is to imply that if an action is involuntary, it is such that no one would choose it "in itself." And this is to say that one's not choosing to do an action "in itself" is a necessary condition of an action's being involuntary. Thus, in this passage Aristotle seems to add something to his analysis of the voluntary/involuntary distinction, to the first criterion. So:

Criterion 2: Something is involuntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) either (1) it takes place under compulsion and would not be chosen to be done "in itself" or (2) it takes place owing to ignorance and would not be chosen to be done "in itself."

> Something is voluntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) both (1) it takes place not uner compulsion and is worthy of choice and (2) it takes place not by reason of ignorance, i.e. with knowledge, and is worthy of choice.

Problems With The Second Criterion. Firstly, the claim that an action which is involuntary is such that it would not be chosen to be done "in itself" seems to mean that if it is chosen, then it is chosen only as a means to something else. Thus, the captain would not choose to throw the goods overboard unless he knew (or had good reason to believe) that by throwing the goods overboard he would effect something nobler or less evil than the throwing of the goods overboard, namely, in Aristotle's example, the safety of himself and his crew.

Yet, it would also be true of voluntary actions that if they are chosen, then they are chosen only as a means to something else. The reason is that whatever is chosen, for Aristotle, is chosen only as a means to something else, an end or a relative end: "We deliberate not about ends but about means" (1112b) and "The same thing is deliberated on and is chosen" (1113a). Thus, that an action is chosen implies that it is chosen only as a means certainly does not distinguish voluntary from involuntary actions. Hence, if Aristotle is correct in what he says about choice, the addition of "and would not be chosen to be done in itself" is irrelevant to the explanation of the voluntary/involuntary distinction.

Secondly, the addition of "and is worthy of choice" to the analysis of the voluntary plainly vitiates that analysis, since not all voluntary actions are worthy of choice, which Aristotle clearly admits when he says in V. ix. and elsewhere, that "the incontinent man voluntarily harms himself" (1136a).

A more general criticism of this second criterion is that its attempt to explain the voluntary/involuntary distinction by reference to the concept of choice places one in the untenable position of not being able to understand the voluntary and, hence, the voluntary/involuntary distinction, until one understands the concept of choice, while, if Aristotle is correct in describing choice as essentially voluntary (III. ii.), one cannot understand the concept of choice until he first understands the voluntary.

The Third Criterion. Another way in which Aristotle distinguishes the voluntary and the involuntary is to be found in 1110b:

> Everything that is done by reason of ignorance is not voluntary; it is only what produces pain and repentance that is involuntary. For the man who has done something owing to ignorance, and feels not the least vexation at his action, has not acted voluntarily, since he did not know what he was doing, nor yet involuntarily, since he is not pained. Of people, then, who act by reason of ignorance he who repents is thought an involuntary agent, and the man who does not repent may, since he is different, be called a not voluntary agent; for, since he differs from the other, it is better that he should have a name of his own.

In this passage Aristotle is saying that it is a necessary condition of an involuntary action done by reason of ignorance that the person who does the action repents for doing it. Conceiving this as an addition to the first criterion, we now have:

Criterion 3: Something is involuntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) it takes place either under compulsion or by reason of ignorance, and (c) if it takes place by reason of ignorance, the person who does the action repents for doing it.

Something is voluntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) it takes place neither under compulsion nor by reason of ignorance.

In the case of the voluntary, since the action does not take place by reason of ignorance, the question of whether or not the person repents does not arise. So, there is no need for a corresponding third condition of the voluntary. Aristotle is claiming that whether or not the person repents is a question that arises only in the cases of certain involuntary actions, those done by reason of ignorance, and of what he calls "not voluntary" actions.

The "not voluntary," as Aristotle explains it, is distinguished from the involuntary by the fact that in "not voluntary" actions the person does not repent for them, while in involuntary actions the person does repent. The "not voluntary," together with the involun-

tary, is distinguished from the voluntary by the fact that no voluntary actions can be done by reason of ignorance, while all "not voluntary" actions must be done by reason of ignorance. The class of "not voluntary" actions, therefore, is just a subclass of involuntary actions. It follows that the "not voluntary" is not contradictive either of the involuntary, its genus, or, strictly speaking, of the voluntary, for we cannot infer from the falsity of "x is voluntary" to the truth of "x is 'not voluntary'" (the action may be compelled). But we can infer from the truth of the latter to the falsity of the former. An implication of the above is that Aristotle is not, in this passage, bringing into dispute the common assumption that if something is either an action or a passion, then it is either voluntary or involuntary, something that a superficial reading might suggest. Rather, he is simply delineating three (not two, as delineated in the first two criteria) classes of involuntary actions: those which are compelled, those which are done by reason of ignorance and not repented, and those that are done by reason of ignorance and are repented.

Problems With The Third Criterion. Firstly, this new definition of the involuntary is incompatible with Aristotle's other claim, made in III. i., that all involuntary actions are excusable. For in order to repent for doing an action owing to ignorance, one must not only recognize both that one did the action and that one did it by reason of ignorance, but, more importantly, one must also recognize both that the action is wrong and that he is somehow to blame for doing it. That is, if either he recognized that the action was not wrong or he recognized that he was not to blame, he would not repent. And, if he did not recognize that the action was wrong or he did not recognize that he was somehow to blame for doing it, he would not repent. Thus, from the fact that one repents for doing an action, it follows that he is to be blamed.[4] And from the fact that he is to be blamed it follows that he is not to be excused for doing the action. Thus, by the above definition of the involuntary, for any involuntary action done by reason of ignorance and which is repented, the person who does the action is not to be excused. But Aristotle also maintains that for any involuntary action, the person who does the action is to be excused. Since Aristotle is plainly correct in saying that we do excuse all involuntary actions, though not all unchosen actions, the above definition of the involuntary is unacceptable.

Secondly, Aristotle's definitions of the involuntary and the "not voluntary" are based on the mistaken assumption that the character of an action may be partially

determined by the person who does the action after it has been accomplished. Yet an action does not become involuntary after it takes place. For to describe an action as involuntary is to describe the way in which it was performed. And the way in which the action was performed is plainly independent of anyone's present reaction to it or thought about it.

It follows, of course, that Aristotle's distinction between the three classes of involuntary actions dissolves; what were "not voluntary" actions are now eliminated, leaving only compelled and non-compelled involuntary actions.

One's present reactions or psychological states, however, may be a key to discovering the character of one's past actions. For example, if someone seems to be repenting for some past action, we may infer that he probably did the action for which he seems to be repenting, that the action was probably voluntary, and that he was probably to blame for doing it. In a similar fashion, the fact that one seems to remember doing an action provides grounds for the claim that he probably did the action. Yet, we certainly would not want to claim that the action which one appears to remember is even partially dependent on his apparent remembering of it any more than we would want to claim that the involuntariness of an action was even partially dependent on one's seeming repentance for it.

The feeling of pain and repentance for those of one's past actions for which one is to be blamed is indicative, I think, of the degree of blame which should attach to the person. But if he is capable of being blamed only for his voluntary actions, the question of the voluntariness, or lack of it, of his action needs to be answered prior to consideration of the degree of his guilt. To insist that one's repentance for his action is relevant to its involuntariness is to put the cart before the horse.

It might also be noted that in III. i. Aristotle constantly conjoins the notions of pain and repentance (see 1110b17, 1111a20, 1111a32). It is true that repentance involves pain. But we might distinguish cases of involuntary actions about which one later is pained from those for which one later seems to repent. For instance, a child darts in front of one's car and is killed. Here there is no question that one killed the child involuntarily (provided that he was not drunk, driving recklessly, etc.) as well as that one, if he is normal, would feel pain at something so unfortunate.

But it would certainly not be true that one could repent for the action, since this would imply blame and by hypothesis, one killed the child involuntarily. Though one might feel blameworthy, and so seem to repent, one would not actually be blameworthy. Thus, one's involuntary actions may be followed by pain without being accompanied by apparent repentance (which involves pain) though not by repentance per se.

The Fourth Criterion. Another criterion of the voluntary/involuntary distinction is to be found in V. viii.:

> By the voluntary I mean, as has been said before, any of the things in a man's own power which he does with knowledge, i.e. not in ignorance either of the person acted on or of the instrument used or of the end that will be attained (e.g. whom he is striking, with what, and to what end), each such act being done not incidentally nor under compulsion (e.g. if A takes B's hand and therewith strikes C, B does not act voluntarily; for the act was not in his own power). The person struck may be the striker's father, and the striker may know that it is a man or one of the persons present, but not know that it is his father; a similar distinction may be made in the case of the end, and with regard to the whole action. Therefore that which is done in ignorance, or though not done in ignorance is not in the agent's power, or is done under compulsion, is involuntary (for many natural processes, even, we knowingly both perform and experience, none of which is either voluntary or involuntary; e.g. growing old or dying). (1135ab)

The phrase "as has been said before" W. D. Ross takes to be a reference to III. i. But, as I have shown, III. i. contains three different criteria of the voluntary/involuntary distinction. Although Aristotle does here repeat part of what he said there, he also adds something and appears to subtract something from what he said.

In the above passage Aristotle speaks of voluntary actions as being done "with knowledge, i.e. not in ignornace . . . ." Yet, in III. i. he speaks of voluntary actions as being done "with knowledge," meaning there "not by reason of ignorance . . . ." In both instances the ignorance relates to "particulars." But in III. i. Aristotle distinguishes between actions done in ignorance and those done by reason of ignorance:

"Acting by reason of ignorance seems also to be different from acting in ignorance; for the man who is drunk or in a rage is thought to act as a result not of ignorance but of one of the causes mentioned, yet not knowingly but in ignorance" (1110b). Although Aristotle does not spell out in detail this distinction, it is clear from what he says here that one may act in ignorance without acting by reason of ignorance. That is, while drunk one acts in ignorance, though the cause of the drunk's action is his being drunk, not necessarily his ignorance. However, his ignorance of a "particular," say, of the fact that he is drinking a 100 proof beverage, may be the cause of his becoming drunk, in which case his actions while drunk would be actions done both in ignoracne and by reason of ignorance (as well as by reason of drunkeness). Further, it would not seem possible to act by reason of ignorance without also acting in ignorance. That is, if his ignorance of a particular is a cause of his action and if he does complete the action, then it would seem to be true that while performing the action he remains ignorant of that particular. Thus, one need not be drunk or in a rage to act in ignorance. Aristotle simply uses these extreme cases to bring out the difference between acting in ignorance and acting by reason of ignorance. In any case, as long as it is granted that acting in ignorance is something quite different from acting by reason of ignorance, it is clear that Aristotle's definition of the voluntary, put forth above, is different from his other definitions of the voluntary which have been considered thus far.

Another difference between Aristotle's above definition of the voluntary and those definitions previously considered is indicated by the phrase "in a man's own power."[5] Aristotle is claiming that in order for someone's action to be voluntary, it must be "in his power" to do the action. This is indicated by the first sentence in the above quote. Of course, being in one's power to do an action is not sufficient for the action to be voluntary. This Aristotle brings out in the last sentence: growing old is in one's power to do, yet it is neither voluntary nor involuntary. But failing to be in one's power to do an action is regarded as sufficient for the action to be involuntary, as the last sentence also indicated, provided, of course, that the action does take place.

I think, therefore, that Aristotle's fourth criterion for distinguishing the voluntary and the involuntary may be set out thus:

Criterion 4: Something is involuntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) it takes place in ignorance or it takes place under compulsion or it is not in one's power.

> Something is voluntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, (b) it does not take place in ignorance and it is not compelled, and (c) it is in one's power.

Problems With The Fourth Criterion. Firstly, if "it is in one's power" is understood as meaning the same as "one is capable of doing it," which is the most obvious way of understanding that phrase and which is the way Aristotle seems to understand it in III. iii., i.e. in his discussion of choice, then to say that the voluntary is in one's power is not to add anything to the understanding of the voluntary. The reason is that being in one's power is a presupposition of doing an action or of feeling a passion, regardless of whether that action or passion is voluntary. That is, of course, it follows from the fact that one has done an action that one was capable of doing it. And, as obviously, it follows from the fact that one has done an action voluntarily that one was capable of doing it. And this follows, not because one's action was voluntary, but because it was one's action. Thus, "it is in one's power" is explicative of "one's doing an action," but not of the voluntary. It is, therefore superfluous to the definition of the voluntary.

Secondly, in the case of Aristotle's definition of the involuntary "it is not in one's power" is a condition which contradicts a presupposition of the involuntary. That is, either one does or one fails to do an involuntary action which is involuntary because it is not in one's power. Suppose one does such an action. Then, one does something of which he is incapable. Hence, one cannot help but fail to do involuntary actions which are involuntary because they are not in one's power. But Aristotle's entire discussion of the involuntary presupposes, correctly, that one can act involuntarily. There is, furthermore, no point in discussing the involuntary with a view of discovering at least part of the class of things pardonable if one is never excused on the grounds of doing something involuntarily. And one is never pardoned on the grounds that his action was involuntary because he was incapable of doing it.

Finally, that an action takes place in ignorance is clearly not sufficient ground for the claim that it takes place involuntarily. Recall that, in Aristotle's own example, the drunk acts in ignorance. Yet, we need to know more than this in order to know that the drunk acts involuntarily: we need to know how it was that he got drunk in the first place. For if he voluntarily gets

drunk, his actions while drunk are voluntary and he is accordingly held to be responsible for his actions. But if he involuntarily gets drunk, his actions while drunk are involuntary and he is excused from responsibility for them. So, in order to determine whether the drunk's actions really are involuntary, we need to know something about the cause of his getting drunk. Generalizing, we need to know something about the cause of an action done in ignorance in order to know whether it is involuntary. So, the mere fact that one acts in ignorance is not a sufficient condition for the claim that he acts involuntarily.

States Of Character As Voluntary. It has been noticed that, in the beginning of III. iii., Aristotle limits the voluntary and the involuntary to the class of things which are either actions or passions: unless something is either an action or a passion, it cannot be either voluntary or involuntary. But toward the end of III. v. Aristotle is willing to describe states of character as voluntary. He says:

> With regard to the virtues in general we have stated their genus in outline, viz. that they are means and that they are states of character, and that they tend, and by their own nature, to the doing of the acts by which they are produced, and that they are in our power and voluntary, and act as the right rule prescribes. But actions and states of character are not voluntary in the same way; for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary. (1114b-1115a)

The description of states of character--by which, it is clear from III. v., Aristotle means both virtues and vices both of the body and of the soul--as voluntary does not contradict the first condition of any of the criteria of the voluntary set forth above. That is, states of character, Aristotle is saying, are voluntary solely because they are the result of a series of actions. We could say that, for Aristotle, actions and passions are voluntary in a primary way and that what they, either singly or collectively, cause or result in are voluntary in a secondary way, i.e. voluntary solely because they are caused by something which is voluntary. For example, one's voluntarily slamming the door causes its window to

break. In this case, one's action of slamming the door is voluntary, but not because it is caused by something else which is voluntary. It is voluntary in a primary way. But one's action of breaking the window is also voluntary, but only because it is caused by one's voluntarily slamming the door. It is voluntary in a secondary way. In a similar fashion, one's habit of slamming doors or one's character as a door-slammer is not voluntary in a primary way. But because, in this case, it is the result of not a single action, but a series of similar actions (of voluntarily slamming many doors), it is voluntary only in a secondary way. Thus, on this interpretation, we may understand Aristotle as holding the following two principles:

(1) Whatever single action or passion is the result of another action or passion, which itself is voluntary, is voluntary in a secondary way.

(2) Whatever state of character, virtue or vice, is the result of a series of actions or passions, each member of which is voluntary, is voluntary in a secondary way.

Then what is voluntary in the primary way is voluntary because it conforms to an adequate criterion of the voluntary, which would include the condition that what is voluntary is either an action or a passion.

Notice, though, that although one may replace "voluntary" with "involuntary" in (1) and be consistent with Aristotle, one may not replace "voluntary" with "involuntary" in (2) and remain consistent with Aristotle. That is, Aristotle agrees that if, for example, A takes B's hand and with it slams the door, B involuntarily slams the door; and if the slamming results in the door's window being broken, then B broke the window involuntarily. But Aristotle cannot agree with the second replacement. For Aristotle there could not be a state of character which is involuntary because it is the result of a series of actions or passions each member of which is involuntary. The reason for this is that a state of character is a disposition to choose and is the result both of doing a number of actions of a certain type and of choosing to do them. Even if, say, A forces B to slam every door which B has an opportunity to slam, this does not cause B to become a door-slammer, to have door-slamming as a state of character. Rather, to become a door-slammer B must choose to slam most or many of the doors which he has an opportunity to slam. So, in order for one's actions or passions to result in the development of a state of character one must choose them. But one cannot choose them unless one chooses them voluntarily: "Choice, then, seems to be voluntary" (1111b).

Thus, it is not possible for a series of involuntary actions or passions to result in a state of character, and, therefore, in an involuntary state of character.

Aristotle's motive for maintaining that states of character are never involuntary is reasonably clear: If they could be involuntary, then those with undesirable states of character, e.g. the unjust and the self-indulgent man, could not be held responsible for them and, consequently, could not be blamed. But Aristotle wants to insist that persons, regardless of their characters, are responsible for the kind of people that they are. Thus, although particular actions and passions may be voluntary or involuntary, states of character may be voluntary only. The main point, however, is that analysis of voluntary states of character is of little value in discovering what is voluntary in a primary way, since states of character are voluntary only in a secondary way.

Toward Adequate Definitions Of The Voluntary And Of The Involuntary. So far, Aristotle has put forward several alleged necessary conditions of the voluntary and of the involuntary. These were, in the case of the voluntary, (1) that it is either an action or a passion, (2) that it takes place neither under compulsion nor owing to ignorance, (3) that it is worthy of choice, (4) that it does not take place in ignorance, and (5) that it is in one's power. I have argued that the definition which Aristotle gives of the compulsory is inadequate, that (3) and (4) are not really necessary conditions of the voluntary, and that (5) is a superfluous condition. In the case of the involuntary, these were (1) that it is either an action or a passion, (2) that it takes place either under compulsion or owing to ignorance, (3) that it would not be chosen to be done "in itself," (4) that if it takes place by reason of ignorance, the person who does the action or feels the passion repents for doing it or for feeling it, and (5) that it takes place in ignorance or under compulsion or it is not in one's power. I have argued that the definition which Aristotle gives of "under compulsion" is not adequate, that (3) is irrelevant to a definition of the involuntary, that (4) is not a necessary condition of the involuntary, that its taking place in ignorance is not a sufficient condition of the involuntary, and that its failing to be in one's power is not a necessary condition of the involuntary.

Of all these conditions, the most accurate are the first two pair: that the voluntary is either an action or a passion and that it takes place neither under compulsion nor by reason of ignorance, and that the

involuntary is either an action or a passion and that it takes place either under compulsion or owing to ignorance. These are the most accurate, but because of the inadequacy of Aristotle's definition of the compulsory, they are not accurate enough. Aristotle is right in outline, but wrong in the details.

Nevertheless, in spite of his explicit definition, Aristotle does hint at a clearer way of defining "under compulsion." He says: "But actions and states of character are not voluntary in the same way; for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious . . ." (1114b-1115a). The key terms here are "masters" and "control." It is my contention that we can better understand the voluntary and the involuntary in terms of the concept of control. The reason for this is that by reference to the concept of control we can better understand the phrase "under compulsion."

Control And Compulsion. Recall that Aristotle's definition of compulsion relies on the concept of the spatial separation of what compels and what is compelled as well as on the concept of a cause, what compels is a cause and what is compelled is not a cause. In the criticism of this definition it was noticed that what is compelled is also a cause: whether A assists, resists, or acquiesces in being carried of by B and C has an influence on B and C's carrying him off. Thus, when A resists being carried off, then, assuming he is carried off, he is both compelled and a cause of the compelled action.

The concept of control, however, does not presuppose that of the spatial separation of what controls and what is controlled. Neither does it presuppose in the same way the concept of cause. What controls is a cause, but what is controlled is also a cause. In particular, suppose that A is carried off by B and C and that A resists being carried off. A, then, is compelled by B and C. A's being carried off, however, is not controlled by A. By his resistance A attempts to control the situation, but he fails. Nevertheless, he remains a cause of his being carried off, for his very resistance influences the action of his being carried off. B and C are also a cause of A's being carried off. Thus, A, what is compelled, is not distinguished from B and C, what compels, on the ground that A is not, while B and C are, a cause of A's being carried off. But, since A does not control his being carried off, while B and C do control his being carried off, what is compelled may be distinguished from what compels on the ground that

the latter, and not the former, also controls. That the concept of control does not presuppose a spatial separation of what is controlled and what controls is obvious from the fact that one may exercize control over his own actions and feelings. Yet, we would not want to maintain that one is spatially separate from his own actions or feelings.

I think, then, that a more accurate definition of "being compelled" is:

Definition 1': A person is compelled by x to do or feel something iff (a) x controls that person's action or feeling, and (b) that person does not control his action or feeling.

Here "x" may be replaced by any term signifying something which is capable of exercizing control, from "John Doe" to "the wind." "Control" is here understood to mean the same as "direct." Thus, B and C control A's activity to the extent that they direct or guide it. When B and C share in directing A's activity or when A alone directs his activity, it is not compelled.

One virtue of this definition of the compulsory, aside from its simplicity, is that it provides another way of interpreting certain of the puzzling expressions toward the beginning of Book III. There Aristotle says: ". . . that is compulsory of which the moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion . . ." (1110a). And, again, "Now the man acts voluntarily; for the principle that moves the instrumental parts of the body in such actions is in him . . ." (1110a). In view of the above definition we may say that "when compelled 'the moving principle is outside' and not 'inside' the person" is just a vague way of saying that when compelled, something else and not the person himself controls his activity or feeling.

Further, unlike the previous definition of the compulsory, the above definition is neutral with respect to the question of whether one may be compelled by the gods, spirits generally, other minds, and the like. For according to the previous, unsatisfactory, definition such questions are ruled out from the start: what compels is spatially distinct from what is compelled.

The above definition also enables us to understand why actions done accidentally, i.e. contrary to intention, are involuntary. Recall that members of this class of actions were instances of failing to know how to do

something in particular. For example, ". . . one might want to touch a man, as people do in sparring, and really wound him . . ." (1111a). In this example the person who wounds the other man wounds him because he fails to exercise control over his own physical activity. Generalizing, failure to have control is a mark of actions done contrary to intention. Since such actions must be directed by something else, they are rightly characterized as involuntary. Similar remarks apply, of course, in the case of actions done "accidentally" in the sense of "non-intentionally."

Control And "By Reason Of Ignorance." Besides aiding in the understanding of the compulsory, the concept of control bears some relation to the notion of acting or feeling by reason of ignorance. Recall that in the quote in which Aristotle hints at defining the compulsory in terms of the concept of control he says: ". . . for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts . . . ." If we think of "the particular facts" as a reference to the circumstances of an action, as previously specified by Aristotle, then Aristotle is saying here that one's not being ignorant of the "particulars" is a sufficient condition for one's being in control of an action. Now those involuntary actions which are involuntary due to compulsion fall into two classes: those actions which one undergoes, such as being carried off, and those actions which one does, such as accidentally wounding another. Knowledge of the particular facts is hardly a sufficient condition for not acting involuntarily due to being compelled to undergo an action. A's knowledge of the particular facts is compatible with B and C carrying him off. But neither is knowledge of the particular facts sufficient for not acting involuntarily due to being compelled to do an action. That is, knowledge of the particular facts is not sufficient for being in control of an action which a person does, rather than one which he undergoes. For one's knowledge of the circumstances of the action is compatible with doing the action accidentally. In this case one's lack of knowledge-how, not his lack of knowledge-that, is the source of his failure to control the action. The class of actions for which one's knowledge of the particular facts is sufficient for being in control, therefore, is narrowed to those actions which one does and which one does non-accidentally, i.e. intentionally. That is, when one is fully acquainted with the circumstances of an action which he does intentionally, he is in control of the action. The reason for this is that knowledge of the circumstances of the intentional action includes knowledge of how to carry out one's intention in the particular case. For instance, one intentionally wounds his sparring partner. One's knowledge of the circumstances of the action

includes knowledge of how to wound his sparring partner in this particular instance. That is, he knows ". . . what he is doing, what or with whom he is acting on, and . . . what . . . he is doing it with, and to what end . . . and how he is doing it" (1111a). Knowing these particulars and his intention, one will also know how to carry out his intention. Knowledge of the particular facts is also necessary for being in control of one's non-accidental actions. One cannot act from his intentions in the particular case unless he is fully acquainted with the circumstances of the action.

Thus, knowledge of the circumstances of one's non-accidental action is both necessary and sufficient for one's being a "master" of his action. And knowledge of the circumstances of one's accidental actions, whether unintentional or contrary to intention, is not sufficient for one's being a master of his actions. Neither, obviously is it a necessary condition. Thus, the only actions of which one can be a master are those which he does, rather than undergoes, non-accidentally. Non-accidental actions, again, cannot take place by reason of ignorance, for they do not take place in ignorance of the particular circumstances. Hence, given that one is a master of an action, is in control, it follows that the action does not take place by reason of ignorance. So, from the fact that one controls an action, it follows both that he is not compelled and that he does not do the action by reason of ignorance.

Aristotle's Implicit Definitions Of The Voluntary And Of The Involuntary. If we take the hint which Aristotle gives us in 1114b-1115a and think of the voluntary/involuntary distinction in terms of the concept of control, we end up with a reasonably clear and simple way of making the distinction, a more clear and simpler way of making it than that afforded by the foregoing explicit criteria. This implicit account, then, is:

Something is involuntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) the person who does the action or feels the passion is not in control of the action or passion.

Something is voluntary iff (a) it is either an action or a passion, and (b) the person who does the action or feels the passion, is in control of the action or passion.

The "or takes place by reason of ignorance" and "or does not take place by reason of ignorance" conditions of the first criterion may now be dropped. For the above definition of "being compelled" renders them superfluous. That is, on the side of the involuntary, if one is not in control of an action which he undergoes, then the question of whether he did the action by reason of ignorance cannot arise. If, on the other hand, he is not in control of an action which he did, then something else is in control of it; then, he is compelled. Given that he is compelled, we do not need to know whether his action took place by reason of ignorance in order to know that it was involuntary. On the side of the voluntary, if one is in control of his action, which, therefore, is not compelled, then he cannot possibly act by reason of ignorance. It is, in other words, contradictory to suppose that one is not compelled to do an action but nevertheless does it by reason of ignorance. For if he is not compelled to do the action, and he does it, he is in control of his action. And one is master only of those actions which he does with knowledge.

The tenability of this implicit criterion rests squarely on the adequacy of the concept of control. To further this analysis somewhat, as well as to see how this criterion is useful in deciding problem cases, consider the problem case which Aristotle mentions at the beginning of III. i.: ". . . it may be debated whether such actions are voluntary or involuntary. Something of the sort also happens with regard to the throwing of goods overboard in a storm . . . on condition of its securing the safety of himself and his crew any sensible man does so" (1110a). To ask whether the action of discarding the goods overboard was voluntary is to ask what controlled the action. If to control is to direct or guide something, then it was voluntary for the captain, since it was he who directed that the goods be discarded. It was also voluntary for the crewmen who actually did the discarding for they certainly directed their bodily actions, even though their only reason for acting may have been to obey the captain. Since in the absence of the storm or other threat to their safety the captain would not have issued his command, the presence of the threat guided his decision, though it did not guide or direct it in the same way in which he guided or directed the activity of discarding the goods overboard. Rather, it guided the action of the captain by presenting him with a good reason to act. Thus, the storm, the crewmen, and the captain all had a hand in the discarding of the goods. The action, therefore, could not have been involuntary for the captain, since he had some control over the action, though not, of course, over his being presented with a good reason to act. For it to have been involun-

tary for the captain, he could not have had any control; he would have to have done it accidentally or to have been used literally as a tool by something else. The resolution of this problematic case certainly illustrates, I think, the need for a further analysis of the concept of control.

I think, then, that a more adequate criterion of the voluntary/involuntary distinction can be found in Aristotle's work than in the first four attempts on which attention has been focused typically. The analysis of this implicit criterion does, however, remain at the level of common sense. In any case, the adequacy and consistency of Aristotle's voluntary/involuntary distinction, as he makes it implicitly, do need to be further examined vis-a-vis his accounts of moral choice and moral culpability.

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NOTES

[1]I am using the W. D. Ross translation from The Basic Works of Aristotle, R. McKeon, ed.

[2]Nevertheless, 1111a26 raises a problem with this, for Aristotle implies that non-human animals can act voluntarily.

[3]I think it can be shown also that the first consequence is false.

[4]It might be urged that, just as there is a strong and a weak sense of "remember," according to the former of which "I remember doing a" implies "I did do a" and according to the latter of which "I remember doing a" does not imply "I did do a," there is a strong and weak sense of "repent," according to the former of which the implications drawn in this paragraph, and those subsequent, do hold and according to the latter of which these implications do not hold; that, consequently, Aristotle is not inconsistent.

[5]Although this phrase also occurs in the passage from which I took the second criterion, it is more convenient to consider it here.