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2017

Character Luck and Moral Responsibility: The Character of the Ordinary Person in Aristotle's Rhetoric and Politics

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CHARACTER LUCK AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY:

THE CHARACTER OF THE ORDINARY PERSON

IN ARISTOTLE'S *RHETORIC* AND *POLITICS*

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY

BY

MARCELLA LINN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many have helped me in the preparation of this dissertation that I wonder how little I have contributed myself. To start, I would like to thank my director, Dr. Thomas Carson whose many, many comments aided enormously in refining my writing and developing the ideas in this dissertation. From the start, he has been encouraging and supportive, reading draft after draft after draft and guiding this project to its completion. My ability to think and write philosophically continues to be refined under his guidance. I am very fortune to have worked with him and to have thought through many of the ideas in this dissertation with him.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the significant role Dr. Julie Ward has played in my development as a writer and thinker. My knowledge of Aristotle is indebted to her teaching and her guidance as director of my master's paper and reader of my dissertation. On several occasions, she played a pivotal role in my interpretation and use of Aristotle, which helped my project evolve in original and interesting ways. The time she has so generously dedicated to me as her student is appreciated beyond measure. I am also so thankful for her advising over the years, which has helped me throughout my progress as a graduate student.

I also thank Dr. J.D. Trout, who not only agreed to be a reader for this dissertation, but so generously agreed to read an earlier draft of one of my chapters. His comments on that draft helped me in each of my subsequent revisions by keeping me focused on some of the bigger questions about using Aristotle in relation to contemporary issues. In addition to his help on my dissertation, my work as his teaching and research assistant was crucial for my becoming

To Joe

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ABSTRACT

There are many significant factors, such as one's natural temperaments and upbringing, that are outside of one's control and affect one's character. This calls into question one's responsibility for one's character, and if we are not responsible for our characters, then it seems we cannot be held responsible for the many actions that stem from them. I will show how a person can be responsible for her character and actions stemming from it despite the pervasiveness of character luck. To do this, I develop an account of character and responsibility from various passages in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics*. The latter two texts take into consideration the ordinary citizen who has not been met with good character luck, and they teach us much concerning the way contingent factors like one's natural temperament or upbringing can affect one's character and actions springing from it. I argue that we can construct an account of responsibility from Aristotle's empirically-grounded texts, the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, that is broader than the standard account taken from the *Nicomachean Ethics* since it does not assume ideal conditions surrounding one's character development and maintenance and thus can apply to more people. This view of responsibility considers not only control and moral awareness, but also one's capacity to develop virtue and perform virtuous actions. This capacity can be affected by one's natural temperaments, upbringing, or circumstances that make it easier or more difficult to develop virtue or perform virtuous actions. I finally will show how the account of character of ordinary people in Aristotle is consistent with recent findings in

contemporary social psychology which is important for establishing that his moral theory passes

the minimal requirement for psychological realism.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Holding that people are morally responsible while acknowledging and respecting the

limited amount of control that humans exercise over their lives is difficult for two reasons. First,

in many cases, it seems intuitive that if luck impinges on a situation, an agent is not fully

responsible, if she is at all. That is, an agent's either being praised, blamed, or held accountable

for something should be affected by the presence of luck. Nicholas Rescher claims that luck and

responsibility are mutually exclusive.

> There is, in the final analysis, no such thing as *moral* luck. The very idea is a
> contradiction in terms that comes to grief in a dilemma. If the significant evaluation at
> issue results from luck, then morality does not enter into it. And if it is moral through
> being in some way within our responsibility and control, then it is not a matter of luck
> (1995, p. 158).

It seems intuitive that when factors outside of a person's control – or luck – affect an agent, they

will also affect her being held responsible. Imagine, for example, a careful driver who is obeying

all traffic laws, but happens to hit a child who quickly, but carelessly runs across a busy road,

leaving no time for the driver to stop or swerve. The driver might feel regret[1] for having been the

proximate cause of the child's injury, but she is not blamable for the accident since her hitting

the child was a matter of bad luck. The driver was unlucky to have hit the child because she did

nothing wrong and could not have prevented it through her agency – she was simply in the

wrong place at the wrong time. While paradigmatic cases of moral luck like this one make

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[1] In fact, Bernard Williams argues that while the driver would not be guilty, it would be appropriate for her to feel
agent-regret (1980, p.42).

Rescher's claim seem plausible, there are other types of cases that raise more difficult questions because they are more complicated. Consider the luck surrounding a person's character. It would be very difficult to determine which parts of a person's character are the result of her efforts alone and which are influenced by factors outside of her control.[2] Even in the consciously chosen actions of a young adult, social upbringing and circumstances play a significant role in the things she has come to value. The kind of people we are is heavily subject to those factors which we do not control. And so, character luck is a special type of luck and will require special attention. The problem remains: if moral luck is a contradiction in terms and so much of our moral lives is subject to luck, there is very little for which one can hold a person responsible. This dilemma leads Thomas Nagel into skepticism about moral responsibility.[3]

A second reason why it is difficult to see how we can be morally responsible in cases of luck is that there are several types of luck so presenting a general account of luck must appreciate the relevant differences between the types of luck. Nagel divides moral luck into four types: 1) an act being overly determined physically (causal luck); 2) the results of one's act being interfered with to produce either positive or negative results (resultant luck); 3) the types of situations or problems that an agent faces (circumstantial luck); and 4) the kind of person one is, which is affected by one's natural temperament and upbringing (constitutive, or character, luck) (Nagel, 1979, p. 60). A general account of moral luck should be able to capture all four kinds of moral luck. Many even argue that it should also apply to all other kinds of luck as well, such as epistemic luck, explaining how each instance is lucky or unlucky. In chapter two, I respond to

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[2] As I will show in chapter two, moral luck is distinct from luck in general insofar as it involves the epistemic problem of knowing. In other words, it takes into account what an agent can reasonably know.

[3] (Nagel, 1979).

the recent demand for a general account of luck and show why moral luck is distinct from other types of luck.

In this dissertation, I focus on character luck – the luck having to do with a person's character. As I have indicated above, character luck is a particularly problematic instance of moral luck because our characters are affected by so much that is outside of our control such as our natural temperaments, upbringings, and the kind of social and political circumstances under which we develop. If all of these factors remove responsibility, then there would be little for which we can be properly held responsible for our characters. And if we are not responsible for our characters, then it seems we cannot be held responsible for the actions that stem from them.

In chapter two, I introduce moral luck and its relation to a general account of luck. Thus far, I have been assuming that lack of control is necessary for luck, meaning that what counts as luck requires that there are factors outside of one's direct or indirect control. But, other accounts differ from this view, arguing that a more accurate view of luck understands luck as what is improbable (Rescher 1995) or modally non-robust (Pritchard, 2005). Recently, Hales has even expressed skepticism that any of the leading three accounts – control, probability, or modal – can fully capture what is and is not lucky (2014). For this project, I begin by showing that lack of control and having significance are necessary, though not sufficient, for something to be attributed to luck. I do this in chapter two. Doing so is necessary to establish the connection between moral luck and responsibility, which requires (some level of) control. A hard determinist and a compatibilitist will certainly argue that nothing is within our control, but these views assume that there is a connection between responsibility and control (namely that control is necessary for responsibility). Other libertarian accounts will disagree about what or how much

is within our control, but again, they assume control is necessary for responsibility.[4] For my dissertation, I do not enter into the free will debate. Throughout, I assume that it is reasonable to hold people responsible for their behavior and that the minority views denying this are false. While I do not defend this assumption, I think it is plausible to believe that people are appropriately held responsible in some sense. For people do respond to criticism or punishment in ways that demonstrate the ability to exercise control over their behavior sufficient for changing it. While character luck creates problems for assignments of moral responsibility, it does not show that we cannot hold anyone responsible for their behavior. In sum, my view would only exclude the hard determinist, who argues that no one can be appropriately held responsible for his or her behavior. I leave it open whether a compatibilist, semi- or super- compatibilist, libertarian, or some other view of freedom or compatibilism is most plausible as nothing I say contradicts these views.

After arguing lack of control is necessary for luck, I then spend the remainder of the chapter discussing moral luck and the particular instance of moral luck called character luck. I argue there that character luck is a special case of moral luck since it involves general conditions surrounding one's life, rather than events, that are better described as fortune, not luck. I conclude chapter two by considering various approaches to assigning responsibility for character despite its being subject to luck. Sher, for one, argues that although the development of character may be influenced by external factors – one's upbringing for example – insofar as character is who one is as a moral agent, it has an internal nature that distinguishes it from other types of things subject to luck. Other ways of treating the problem of character luck include showing that

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[4] Some accounts of responsibility circumvent questions about what counts for control by endorsing a quality of will or attributability account of responsibility. See Frankfurt (1971), Arpaly (2009), or Doris (2002 & 2015) for just some examples of this.

some temperaments are more active than others and hence are morally significant[5] or considering the fact that we can act out of character, suggesting we are capable of acting otherwise.[6] I raise problems with each of these views and conclude that a reexamination of character is needed to understand moral responsibility.

Along with control, responsibility is also traditionally thought to require moral understanding. For example, a person might have tendencies to behave selfishly, but be unaware that her behavior is morally wrong. Perhaps she was raised on a heavy dose of individualism causing her to understand her behavior as admirable because it displays self-sufficiency and pride in one's own work. She may not understand her reluctance, and maybe sometimes unwillingness, to help others as an instance of poor behavior because she does not understand helping others to be her responsibility. She may even think that her unwillingness to provide her time or money for others as an instance of helping them to become more self-sufficient. It is possible that a person lacks awareness of the wrongness of many things she does. What this example illustrates is that a person may lack the necessary moral knowledge to understand that her behavior is in need of modification and the source of her limited awareness might be outside of her control (e.g. an improper upbringing and social circumstances). Given that there are examples of this sort, it's also plausible to think that moral understanding is required for responsibility – at least this is often the case in traditional theories of responsibility.

Still, not all accounts of responsibility require both control and moral understanding. On some views, responsibility is understood as either attributability (of a praiseworthy or blameworthy trait) or accountability (as in a case where one is not at fault, but is expected to

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[5] (Trianosky, 1993)

[6] (Moody-Adams, 1993)

compensate in some way for the damage caused by her act).[7] Attributability accounts are those in the spirit of Harry Frankfurt who endorses a quality of will account: a person is responsible with respect to the quality of her will, whether or not she exercised complete control over its development or is fully aware of its moral quality. Accountability views suspend judgment of praise or blame and focus instead on compensating for harms done to others when one's actions play a role in causing the harm, but the harm is not one's fault. For example, consider a driver who may choose to run her vehicle into a parked car to avoid hitting a pedestrian. Though this is not a blameworthy choice, she may still be held accountable for the damage done to the parked car. In other words, being held accountable means a person is expected to compensate for bad or harmful behavior even though she is not blamed for it.

Throughout my discussion of moral luck and the character of the ordinary person, I do not defend my own account of responsibility, but rather, I start with the assumption that responsibility will involve control and moral understanding, that is, awareness of the moral significance of a situation and one's behavior as well as having moral knowledge. It is important to note here that one might lack awareness or moral knowledge but still be culpable for bad behavior if one's ignorance is culpable. For example, a doctor might administer a drug to which her patient has a serious allergy because she was unaware of the allergy. But, if the doctor's ignorance was caused by her own negligence – as would be the case if this was an allergy she was supposed to check for before administering the drug – then she is culpable for the patient's reaction to the drug because she is culpable for her ignorance of the allergy. If, by contrast, the allergy the patient had was a rare one of which the patient was not even aware, it was not part of the doctor's protocol to check for such allergy, and the doctor had no other reason to check for it,

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[7] See Nelkin (2014, pp. 5-9) for some discussion on the different senses of responsibility. See also Card (1996) or Hill (2000) who discuss being responsible in an accountability sense.

then the doctor would not be culpable for either the patient's reaction or her ignorance. I assume

that responsibility involves control and moral understanding since our ordinary practices and

many theories of responsibility use these two conditions to determine whether one should be held

responsible. Rather than provide a defense for this view, I instead focus on how responsibility for

character and what follows from it is still intelligible according to it. But, in acknowledging the

limited control and moral understanding the ordinary person exercises on account of the

pervasiveness of moral luck, I argue in chapter two that these conditions should be understood in

less stringent ways. The examination of character and responsibility in Aristotle in chapters

three, four, and five explain how and why the conditions should be less stringent. There, I

construct an account of responsibility from what Aristotle says in various places that takes into

consideration a person's capacity to form virtue and perform virtuous actions. I do so by bringing

together his discussion of character and responsibility from *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*), *Rhetoric*,

and *Politics* in a far more extensive way than has been done before. The pieces I use to construct

this account are Aristotle's, but the account itself is not explicitly stated by him.

In chapter three, I focus on the account of character, character development, and

responsibility in Aristotle's *EN*, especially on his emphasis on that which is "up to us." In

chapters four and five, I compare the *EN* account to his *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, finding evidence

for a view of character and responsibility that is broader and more empirically adequate than the

account given in the *EN* alone, one that emphasizes contingent factors such as one's age or

circumstances. Since the former text is written for an audience that Aristotle assumes has been

met with good moral luck – they are free, Greek male citizens who are in the best position to

become virtuous since they have the right temperaments and upbringings – he ignores cases

where a person may lack the capacity to become virtuous or whose capacity is limited on account

of bad moral luck. By contrast, in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, his emphasis is on these cases since

he is writing about a more general population. Though Aristotle does not explicitly state his view

of character and responsibility in these texts, I construct such a view using pieces from all three

texts, especially the more empirically-grounded texts, i.e., the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. In chapter

four, I focus on the moral luck concerning one's natural temperaments – that is, temperaments

with which one is born or temperaments that develop naturally over time, on account of physical

changes that take place in relation to age. Here, my discussion is limited to the *Rhetoric*. In

chapter five, I focus on the moral luck concerning one's social inheritances – that is, one's

upbringing and community. I discuss passages from both the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. I will show

that, taken together, the *EN*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics* develop Aristotle's wider ethical view of

character and responsibility. This view acknowledges and respects the pervasive role that moral

luck plays in the development and maintenance of character.

Not only does an examination of Aristotle's more empirically-grounded texts tell us a

great deal more about the character of the ordinary person, it also reveals further evidence in the

Politics that his notion of virtue does not set an unreasonably high standard. In the ideal city, for

instance, all citizens will be fully virtuous. Yet, Aristotle acknowledges that virtue is hard to

maintain by one's own efforts alone and so he puts provisions in place so that one's

circumstances can help one avoid acting against the common good. For example, he claims that a

citizen ought to own two properties – one near land and one near the sea – in order that he does

not favor laws that benefit one place at the expense of the other.[8] In the ideal city, the citizens

will be wealthy enough to afford both properties and by having both they are less likely to vote

for laws that will be beneficial to those living in one place at the expense of another. Instead,

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[8] I discuss this example and others in chapter five.

they will be in a better position to think about what laws will be best for everyone, regardless of where they live. That a fully virtuous person would need good laws not only to have developed virtue, but to maintain his virtue is a surprising part of Aristotle's view given that it is commonly thought that he holds that the virtuous person performs virtuous actions on the basis of character alone.

In chapter six, I show that Aristotle's view of the ordinary person and the less-than-perfect ideal of the fully virtuous person is consistent with recent findings of social psychologists whose experiments show that a person's behavior is more significantly determined by minor situational factors rather than character. This view is called situationism. Even more, Aristotle remarks about how a person's mood will affect her behavior is interesting giving the vast empirical evidence of the strong connection between good moods and helping behavior. In the *Rhetoric*, for instance, he explicitly acknowledges the effect mood has on decision making and behavior and subsequently spends ten chapters discussing ways in which an orator might arouse certain emotions in order to make his audience more persuadable. This is an important task given the recent drive in contemporary ethics towards empirical adequacy. Owen Flanagan refers to this drive as "psychological realism" and states the minimal version of it as follows.

> Make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or perceived to be possible, for creatures like us. (1991, p. 32)

Both philosophers and psychologists have recognized the importance of having an empirically adequate account of ethics.[9] This has posed a particularly difficult problem for virtue ethicists

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[9] While some might argue that psychology, being part of the natural sciences, can only yield descriptive claims that cannot undermine a normative theory, psychological realism is not as controversial a thesis as naturalism. For even Aristotle thought it important to accurately conceptualize human psychology before one could show what the good for a human is. See for example his famous function argument at *EN*, I.7, 1097b30-1098a15. See Hurka (1993) who argues that we can base moral theories on an account of human nature.

given the amount of empirical data that has indicated it is one's situations, not one's character, that more significantly determines her behavior. To mention briefly just a few studies, which I will go on to discuss in detail in chapter six, consider the following.

Good moods and helping behavior. In various studies, the presence of a good smell or lack of loud ambient noise increased the amount of helping behavior in subjects by putting them in a good mood.[10] In another famous study, finding a dime in a phone booth almost always resulted in helping a person pick up a stack of papers that were dropped, and the not finding of a dime almost always resulted in the person's not helping.[11]

The Milgram Experiments. In these 1963 experiments, the gentle urging of the experimenter was enough to cause most subjects to attempt to administer lethal levels of high-voltage shocks to a hidden, but audibly in pain, learner whenever he answered a question incorrectly.[12]

Situations and Samaritans. Darley and Batson's 1973 study on situational factors and helping behavior showed that minor situational changes like being in a rush determined whether a seminarian stopped to help a women in distress.[13]

Watching Eyes. Moral behavior has been shown to increase when a picture of eyes is present rather than a picture of flowers. Pictures of eyes have been correlated with: increased generosity in a game where players decide how much of their good fortune they would share

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[10] (Mathews and Cannon, 1975, p. 575)

[11] (Levin and Isen, 1972).

[12] (Milgram, 2009, pp. 27-31).

[13] (Darley and Batson, 1973)

with other players,[14] increased donations to a communal pot in a public goods game,[15] increased

donations to a communal pot used to replenish the coffee supply in a shared office,[16] and

decreased litter in a self-service cafeteria.[17]

     Group Effect. The results of group effect studies conducted by Latané and Nida show that

when a higher the number of people are present, the chances of any individual helping are

lower.[18]

For some scholars, such as Gilbert Harman,[19] these studies indicate that it is the situation, not a

person's character, that more reliably predicts her behavior, casting doubt on the very existence

of character. Others, such as Maria Merritt,[20] John Doris,[21] or Christian Miller[22] argue that the

evidence is stacked against a view of character based on Aristotelian psychology. But, when we

consider both Aristotle's view of the ordinary person and the more realistic conception of virtue

we find in his *Politics*, the worry that an updated psychology undermines his view is assuaged. In

chapter six, I show the extent to which Aristotle's view of character and virtue is empirically

adequate as it is consistent with these findings in social psychology.

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[14] (Haley and Fessler, 2005)

[15] (Burnham and Hare, 2007)

[16] (Bateson et al, 2006)

[17] (Ernest-Jones et al, 2011)

[18] (Latané and Nida, 1981)

[19] (Harman, 1999 & 2010)

[20] (Merritt, 2000 & 2010)

[21] (Doris, 2002 & 2010)

[22] (Miller, 2013 & 2014a)

In response to those like Harman, Doris, Merritt, and Miller who think character as traditionally attributed to Aristotle is empirically inadequate, many have persisted in defending an Aristotelian account of character and virtue by arguing that the evidence from social psychology does not challenge his view. I also respond in defense of Aristotle against situationist critiques of him, but I take a different approach than others. Whereas some of these responses, like that of Julia Annas (2005), remain unsympathetic to situationist findings, I consider what these findings say about ordinary people and how they coincide with what Aristotle says. My approach stands in contrast to the traditional theories of virtue and character attributed to Aristotle in that it expresses a more realistic account of virtue and considers the ordinary person who lacks full virtue or vice. Others, such as Annas, rely on ideal notions of virtue and practical wisdom. Only Neera Badhwar (2014) takes an approach like mine, but while she raises important points in regards to the realistic conception of virtue in Aristotle, she does not do so to the extent that I do and she leaves out an important distinction between actual virtue and ordinary character in Aristotle. Further, my account is unique in that I show how assigning responsibility is possible despite character luck.

In sum, what I will show in my dissertation is that we can develop a more empirically adequate account of character and an account of responsibility with less stringent conditions than the account in the *EN* out of what Aristotle says in different places. This account is significant because it shows how one can be responsible for a character whose development is heavily subjected to luck and the actions that follow from it, while still: (1) accounting for why consistencies in behavior are situational, which cause situationists to take as indication of a lack of character traditionally conceived, (2) respecting the limited control over and moral understanding of our behavior, and (3) respecting the influence our natural dispositions and

social world has on our character development. I do this by putting together insights from what Aristotle says about character and responsibility, especially in works outside the *EN*, namely the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. I argue that the *EN* emphasizes certain things like control (what is "up to us") and ignores contingent factors like one's natural temperaments and upbringing since the intended audience has already been blessed with naturally good dispositions and has had a good upbringing. Thus, they are responsible for knowing and choosing the good. By contrast, Aristotle focuses on those contingent factors in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* since he has in mind a more general population. The result is a more realistic expectation of moral development and virtue. As I fill out Aristotle's account of character by emphasizing contingent factors in its development and maintenance, I show how he accounts for the ordinary person who lacks robust traits and so is highly vulnerable to situational factors. Further, the view of full virtue in Aristotle does not suppose all virtues are global or that a fully virtuous agent never relies on situational cues to consistently behave virtuously. So, the worry that Aristotelian virtue requires the kind of psychology humans do not have that can sustain global traits independently of one's circumstances – or that Aristotle's view lacks psychological realism – is addressed by showing the traditional view attributed to him is a misunderstanding of his actual view. The fact that most people do not have robust traits and are largely influenced by situational factors is also accounted for if we bring together what Aristotle says about the ordinary person, who lacks a unified character. The result is an empirically adequate view of character and responsibility that not only addresses the problem of character luck and the limited control we exercise and moral understanding we have, but is to a large extent consistent with recent work in social psychology, and therefore meets the demand for psychological realism.

CHAPTER TWO

LUCK, MORAL LUCK, AND CHARACTER LUCK

The problem with moral luck is that it raises significant problems for responsibility. If responsibility requires that an agent exercise some level of control and maintain some level of awareness – as is traditionally held – and moral luck involves that which falls outside of our control, then it seems that one cannot be properly held responsible for what can be chalked up to luck. In fact, some, like Rescher, argue that "moral luck" involves a contradiction. If, however, luck and morality are mutually exclusive, and luck remains a pervasive feature of our lives, then where is there room for responsibility? For if the ways we habitually think, reason, desire, and act are significantly impacted by our surroundings – surroundings which we often do not choose, especially in the early stages of our development – then most of what typically grounds our being held responsible is caused by luck. Yet, we hold people responsible for being callous or careless despite the fact that they may not have freely chosen to become so. If we did not, so much of our characters and behavior would be excused that we would have to give up many serious attributions of responsibility.[1]

This chapter addresses three broad areas of luck. First, I present recent concerns for constructing a general account of luck, one which aims at capturing all the individual types of

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[1] Here and most elsewhere, I focus on responsibility for character and for actions that stem from one's character. This is the particular field of responsible action that is affected by character luck. This does cover much for which we are held responsible, but it does not address those actions that do not stem from a person's character, but for which a person is rightly held responsible. For example, a generally patient person might lose her temper because she is under a lot of stress and lash out at a friend. While her behavior is uncharacteristic of her, it is not excused merely because it is out of character.

luck: moral, epistemic, or otherwise. I argue in response to these concerns that lack of control

and significance are a necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for luck. Next, I transition to

moral luck. Establishing lack of control as a necessary condition for luck makes the connection

to moral luck since moral luck involves the conflict between luck and responsibility, and

responsibility requires that one exercise some control. Finally, I focus on a particular type of

moral luck – character luck. Character luck is more complicated than other types of moral luck

since it involves both the natural temperaments with which we are born and the circumstances in

which we develop and it does not seem to meet the requirements for being instances of luck. I

conclude that character luck is a genuine instance of luck, but involves the related concept of

fortune. In this final section, I examine other views about how we ought to treat character luck

before I argue that a broader view of character is necessary if we are to understand how

responsibility and character luck can be adequately understood.

I. A General Account of Luck

Andrew Latus points out that prior to his 2003 piece, there had not been much work done

to give a general account of luck. Rather, he observes, most accounts typically assume a control

account of luck – luck is anything that is beyond one's control.[2] Recent accounts of luck present

various views championing one of three aspects of luck[3]: (1) chance or probability[4], (2) modal

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[2] See for example (Nagel, 1979), (Williams, 1981), (Card, 1993), (Walker, 1998), (Zimmerman, 2003). See also more recent instances: (Wolf, 2004), (Tessman, 2005), (Hanna, 2014), (Nelkin, 2014). Latus argues for a hybrid view of luck that includes 3 elements: (1) lack of control; (2) low probability of happening; (3) significance of event (Latus, 2003).

[3] Some views do opt for hybrid accounts. See (Latus, 2003), (Levy, 2011), (Riggs, 2007), or (Broncano-Berrocal, 2015). I imply a hybrid view is best in the moral luck section of this chapter.

[4] (Rescher, 1995)

non-robustness[5], or (3) lack of control.[6] In this chapter, I argue, *pace* Broncano-Berrocal, that

lack of agential control is a necessary condition for a general account of luck.[7] The goal of this

section is to highlight the importance of control in the typical (ordinary and philosophical)

understanding of responsibility. In brief, lack of control is typically treated as a mitigating factor

when assigning responsibility to someone. One might have bad luck, which mitigates blame, or

good luck, which may mitigate praise.

In addition to an event's[8] being either improbable, modally non-robust, or outside of

one's control, all general accounts of luck typically include a significance condition that requires

an event have significance if it is to be considered lucky or unlucky. Thus an event that is not

important to the agent will not qualify as lucky or unlucky even if it is improbable, morally non-

robust, or outside of her control.[9] With a significance condition, cases of luck that do not affect

human beings will be eliminated.[10] For example, a star in a distant galaxy may implode despite

its being unlikely to occur, but if its effects do not reach earth, it has no significance for us.

While some event in a distant galaxy may affect other non-human beings in ways that are

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[5] (Pritchard, 2005, 2012), (Whittington, 2014), (Carter and Peterson, 2016)

[6] (Mele, 2006) and (Greco, 2010)

[7] See Broncano-Berrocal (2015) who argues that the presence of other features (namely (1) or (2)) can be included to make distinctions between kinds of luck. In particular, he argues that the modal (non-)robustness of events can help us distinguish between types of luck, but unless there is a lack of agential control, there is no instance of luck.

[8] I follow Coffman's lead in understanding "event" to include facts or truths, as in the colloquialism, "In the event that," which can also mean "If it's the case that" or "If it's true that." (Coffman, 2009, p. 499). It is not until I treat character luck in section 2 of this chapter, that I distinguish between events and general conditions or circumstances of a person's life.

[9] (Hales, 2014)

[10] This may go for either moral or epistemic luck. If an event has no moral import, its occurrence will not be morally lucky or unlucky for an agent. Similarly, if a belief has no significance, one's happening to believe it is not lucky or unlucky.

significant to them, here I am only concerned with what is significant for human beings. Other

cases that I exclude are those such as the improbability of seeing a pigeon on one's drive home

from work or is significant for an animal.[11] What counts as significant varies by philosopher. The

following are views about what counts as significant: (1) an agent would call an event significant

if she knew the relevant facts[12]; (2) the event has some objectively significant status for the

agent, whether or not she is aware of it[13]; (3) the agent has some subjective or objective[14] interest

that the event effects either positively or negatively.[15] Duncan Pritchard has recently changed his

view from (1) to denying the significance condition: he argues that human significance is not

part of the metaphysical load a general account of luck should be expected to carry.[16] In this

chapter, I endorse the significance condition, but I do not specify how we should understand this

condition as my goal is not to produce a general account of luck.

In sum, what a general account aims to do is make sense of all the individual instances of

luck that occur in either the moral or epistemic realm. Given my interest in moral luck, I will

focus on the relation between the general account and moral luck. I do not here present a general

account of luck. My aim is more modest than that. I will merely show that lack of control is a

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[11] Aristotle also claims that what is called a matter of luck for an animal is not a genuine instance of luck (*tuchē*) since it does not involve choice (*Physics*, II.6, 197b15).

[12] (Pritchard, 2005, pp. 132-133)

[13] (Coffman, 2007, p. 388)

[14] Bellantyne says of subjective and objective interests: "Subjective interests… are associated with mental states like desires, preferences, and consciously adopted goals. Objective interests are often tied to health or proper biological function; they're the sorts of interests some people say we have in leading a life that includes knowledge or friendship. Even if we take no interest (subjective) in such things, we still have an interest (objective) in them" (2012, p. 331).

[15] (Bellantyne, 2012, p. 331)

[16] (Pritchard, 2014, p.604)

necessary condition for luck. Without this condition, the moral significance of luck gets lost. Since responsibility is often understood as requiring that some kind of control is exercised, including a lack of control condition in an account of luck forges the connection between luck and moral responsibility; the presence of luck tends to mitigate, and sometimes even remove, responsibility because it involves that which is outside of our control. To make my argument for this condition, I first consider Jennifer Lackey's view that lack of control is not necessary for luck and show how the counterexample she uses fails to demonstrate this. Since the standard procedure is to examine counterexamples, I will construct my argument by pointing out where her counterexample is insufficient. The main problem with her objection is that it operates on an insufficient understanding of control. Thus, it will also be important to give necessary and sufficient conditions for control. I then give a positive argument for the control condition.

Lackey argues that lack of control is neither sufficient nor necessary for a general account of luck. Since I do not aim to show lack of control is sufficient, I will focus on her argument against its being a necessary condition. Lackey argues that since one's having control might itself be a matter of luck, lack of control is not a necessary feature of a lucky or unlucky event (2008, p. 259). To illustrate this conclusion, she presents the case of The Demolition Worker, which goes as follows.

> **Demolition Worker**. Ramona is a demolition worker, about to press a button that will blow up an old abandoned warehouse, thereby completing a project that she and her co-workers have been working on for several weeks. Unbeknownst to her, however, a mouse had chewed through the relevant wires in the construction office an hour earlier, severing the connection between the button and the explosives. But as Ramona is about to press the button, her co-worker hangs his jacket on a nail in the precise location of the severed wires, which radically deviates from his usual routine of hanging his clothes in the office closet. As it happens, the hanger on which the jacket is hanging is made of metal, and it enables to electrical current to pass through the damaged wires just as Ramona presses the button and demolishes the warehouse. (Lackey, 2008, p.258)

Lackey argues that although this is clearly a case of luck, Ramona exercises control insofar as

her pressing of the button is the direct cause of demolishing the warehouse. The fact that she had

control over demolishing the building was merely a matter of the luck involving her co-worker's

hanging his coat in the right spot at the right time. For a significant period of time, the wires

were not connected and so Ramona was indeed lucky that just before she hit the button, a

connection was established that would allow her to effectively demolish the building. Thus,

Lackey concludes that lack of control is not necessary for luck; this is a case involving both

control and luck.

     In response to Lackey's view, Coffman (2009) and Levy (2009) similarly suggest that the

luck surrounding the circumstances that put Ramona in a position to demolish the warehouse

does not transfer to her actually demolishing the building. Coffman argues that she might have

been lucky to have been in a position to demolish it, but once in that position, she is not lucky

that she pressed the demolishing button (Coffman, 2009, p. 503). Levy similarly states, "Neither

the exercise of [Ramona's] control nor the occurrence of the event are lucky; the luck is prior to

them" (Levy, 2009, p. 493). Levy says that luck was involved at the time when Ramona's co-

worker hung his coat, but not when she presses the button and effectively demolishes the

building. He claims that later events do not inherit the luck of earlier ones. There is something

that these two responses get right. If luck could be inherited, then the result would be

undesirable; there would be too many events counted as instances of luck. Take for example the

luck of my being alive (something significant to me and outside of my control). The luck present

there does not pass on to all of my subsequent actions. On that basis, it is not now a matter of luck that I intentionally type these words.[17]

There is yet another way in which Lackey's counterexample fails to demonstrate that lack of control is a necessary condition. The sense of control she is operating with is one in which is restricted to what Broncano-Berrocal calls "effective control" (2015, pp. 18-19). Many accounts that speak both for and against the control account focus on one's ability to produce or prevent an event.[18] Yet, when one has control over something, one has more than the ability to physically cause or prevent a state of affairs. She also has knowledge of the state of affairs that allows her to deliberate accordingly. Broncano-Berrocal calls this "tracking control" and describes it as a kind of monitoring which involves two components: (1) epistemic – one has the appropriate information about something and (2) dispositional – one's knowledge allows one to begin, stop, or continue an action that will achieve some goal (2015, p. 20). For example, a doctor's control over a patient's health involves her monitoring the patient's physical well-being, which allows her to intervene with medicine if needed. When it comes to Lackey's Demolition Worker, she fails to have control in the tracking sense because she is not aware of the severed wires before she hits the button.

I find Broncano-Berrocal's distinction between effective and tracking control compelling. There are many cases where luck is attributed because the consequences of one's action were not foreseeable. If, for example, I accidentally scratch a friend of mine during a pickup basketball game and he develops an infection as a result, I might be held responsible insofar as it is not a totally unforeseen consequence of getting a cut. But, if he runs a red light on the way to the

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[17] See Levy (2009, p. 492) for a similar example.

[18] See Statman (1993), Zimmerman (1993), Lackey (2008), and Coffman (2009).

doctor's office and gets a ticket, he could not fairly hold me accountable. Even though my giving

him a cut was the reason he was headed to the doctor's office, getting a ticket is not a foreseeable

consequence of getting (or giving) a cut.[19] Hence it was a matter of bad luck that he got a ticket

as a result of the scratch I gave him.[20]

Thus, we can say one has control if she has: (1) the ability to produce or prevent an event

and (2) relevant knowledge of an event which allows her to gather information needed to affect

an event or to predict the consequences of certain actions with respect to an event. These capture

Broncano-Berrocal's understanding of control and add the feature that one is able to predict how

her actions will affect her circumstances.[21] We might state the control condition, which is a

necessary conditions for luck, as follows:

> *Control Condition*: A has control over B if and only iff (*i*) A can act to either produce or
> prevent B from happening, and (*ii*) A has the relevant knowledge with respect to B that
> allows A to gather information needed to either (a) reliably affect B (i.e. reliably start,
> stop, or continue B) and (b) predict the consequences of A's action with respect to B.

Including both effective and epistemic features of control helps illuminate where Lackey's

demolition worker fails to show control as unnecessary for luck. Ramona fails to satisfy

condition (*ii*) since she is not in an epistemic position to reliably destroy the building; she

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[19] Here the unforeseeability is on account of an effect (getting a ticket) that does not normally follow from a particular cause (getting scratched). Later I consider cases where the causal connection might be there, but a person lacks relevant information that would allow her to make predictions with respect to an even. In other words, foreseeability is important whether or not an occurrence is likely.

[20] This is similar to Aristotle's claim that luck (*hē tuchē*) and chance (*to automaton*) are coincidental (or accidental) causes (*aitia kata sumbebēkos*). Since their results don't follow always or for the most part (and so are not foreseeable), they are causes only in a coincidental (or accidental) sense (*Physics*, II.5, 196b23-28). Luck (*hē tuchē*) and chance (*to automaton*), for Aristotle, ultimately involves two events coinciding such that one event has the effect that typically follows from another, but does not typically follow from itself. Luck is a narrower instance of chance insofar as it only applies to those cases involving human choice.

[21] Including an epistemic feature will also mean that our knowledge not be a matter of luck. In other words, a belief that is the result of epistemic luck – dubbed a "Gettiered belief" – that functions within one's deliberative process will cause the conclusion of one's deliberation to be lucky or unlucky in proportion to the significance of that belief in the process.

happens to contribute to its destruction, but was not aware of the severed wires which makes her pressing of the button unreliably effective (requiring, for example, the placing of a coat hanger at the right spot).

There are other counterexamples to the view that lack of control is sufficient for luck. The sun's rising is outside of one's control, and its rising is significant for a human being, yet it is not a matter of luck that the sun rises each day.[22] However, this is not a problem for my account since I do not aim to show that lack of control is both necessary and sufficient. Still, some discussion of these counterexamples helps in our understanding of lack of control. The counterexample of the sun's rising is similar to another counterexample given by Lackey. She uses an example of her regularly picking up her daughter from school. Although having her mom pick her up is outside of Lackey's daughter's control, she is not considered lucky each time her mom picks her up. Lackey takes this also to show we should reject the view that lack of control is sufficient for luck. Both in the case of the sun's rising and of Lackey's daughter, a person may use the knowledge of a thing in order to make plans or predictions in relation to a thing. When it comes to the sun's rising, one can use her knowledge that the sun will rise tomorrow in her deliberating about her wish to sun bathe in the morning. Thus, while she may not have effective control over the fact that the sun will rise, she is able to plan her life accordingly and position herself to benefit from the regular occurrence. Similarly, Lackey's daughter can walk to the spot where she is regularly picked up by her mom even if she cannot control whether her mom will show up.

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[22] See Lackey (2008) and Hales (2014) who discuss this counterexample.

These examples help elucidate the latter part of (ii) of the control condition: that one can predict the consequences of her act with respect to a fact or event (e.g., the sun's rising or getting picked up). Both the sun bather and Lackey's daughter can reasonably expect that they will catch the sun or get picked up if they position themselves accordingly. Neither case is a case of luck since one is able to make reliable predictions with respect to them. Thus, these examples show that while a person may lack effective control, she might still exercise epistemic control. For example, the sun bather does not exercise control *over* the sun's rising, but can exercise control *with respect to* it. Similarly, a child might not effectively control her mother's behavior, but she can still predict that her mother will pick her up and plan accordingly.

The preceding discussion provides a response to Lackey's objection that lack of control is a necessary condition for luck and in doing so I have elucidated what it means for a thing to be outside of an agent's control. While I have responded to a prominent objection to the control condition, I have not yet provided evidence that lack of control is necessary for luck. While I lack space here to provide a full defense of lack of control as a necessary, it does seem counterintuitive to hold, as Lackey does, that an event can be a matter or luck for a person who exercises control either over or in relation to it. Take, for instance, winning the lottery. This is a paradigmatic case of luck. Yet, if a person could rig the lottery so that she would win, it would hardly make sense to call her winning a matter of luck. The same thing seems to hold for any other paradigmatic cases of luck – place the otherwise lucky or unlucky event under an agent's control and the results of the event no longer seem to be a matter of luck.

II. Transition from a General Account of Luck to Moral Luck

While including a lack of control condition in a general account of luck makes a connection to moral luck since responsibility requires control, the connection between the two is

not yet fully established. For some things may be outside of our control, and have moral

significance, but may not meet the other conditions required for calling something a matter of

luck. In remaining modest in what I do in this chapter, I will not present a full account of all the

conditions for luck. But, I have conceded that lack of control, though necessary, is not sufficient

for luck. This is clearly the case in the example of the sun's rising each morning – there we have

an event that is far outside any agent's control, but is not a matter of luck. In this section, I

continue to be modest in my aims. While I will not give a full account of the necessary and

sufficient conditions for luck, my argument does not require it. I recognize that, aside from lack

of control and significance, there may be other conditions for a general account of luck, but I do

not consider what these may be. I proceed by analyzing and defending cases of moral luck that

are taken as paradigmatic. I have stated that the significance condition will involve anything that

has significance for a human, whether that be understood in objective terms – i.e., independently

of her taking an interest in it – or subjective terms – i.e., only in case where she consciously

acknowledges a thing's significance to her. Regardless of how significance is defined my view

will not be affected since I can defend moral luck on any of these views. In this section, I

respond to the worry Stephan Hales raises that no general account of luck can capture every

instance of moral luck, especially cases of natural temperaments and social inheritances, which

are the focus of my dissertation. So, I focus on whether these paradigmatic cases of moral luck

are genuine cases of luck. I conclude that character luck involves fortune, but is still a genuine

instance of luck.

Hales argues that no one general theory of luck captures all instances of luck.[23] Defenders of moral luck are in particular posed with a problem. Of the three kinds of general theories of luck –probability, modal, and control – Hales argues that not having a control account of luck makes moral luck disappear. On the modal or probability accounts, many cases of moral luck do not arise, as I will explain shortly. He argues that a general account of luck must include more than a control and a significance condition. For if luck were merely a matter of lack of control over a significant event, too many things would be considered a matter of luck that are obviously not. For example, the sun's rising every day is outside of our control and significant, but not a matter of luck. But, I have shown above that the case of the sun's rising does not actually meet the control condition since one can exercise epistemic control in relation to it. Still, I have only argued that lack of control is necessary, not sufficient. So it may be the case that some instances of moral luck do not meet all conditions. If this is true, Hales argues we can either admit that "luck" is ambiguous (which Hales argues we cannot) and say that there is a different theory for moral luck than for epistemic luck, or we must admit there is no such thing as moral luck. I will argue that moral luck is ambiguous.

Hales argues that the control theory has been mostly assumed in the moral luck literature; philosophers have not specified what counts as being outside of one's control nor have they posited other conditions for counting a thing as a matter of luck. He claims, "To my knowledge, the only defender of moral luck who explicitly adopts something other than a straight control view is Peels (2015), who defends a hybrid view of luck that includes lack of control as a

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[23] (Hales, 2015).

necessary condition" (Hales, 2015, p. 2387). Still, Hales finds that even on a hybrid view, some paradigmatic cases of moral luck cannot be accounted for.

One might argue that under the other theories of luck, such as a strict probability or modal account, moral luck arises, and thus a control account or condition is not necessary. I have argued above that lack of control is a necessary condition, but, if it were not, Hales argues that moral luck will not arise on other accounts. For example, take the social and genetic lotteries; it seems lucky to have been born with certain genetic, social, intellectual, or economic privileges. However, Hales argues that under the probability account, these are not cases of luck since it is not improbable that a person is born to her parents into the society in which they reside. First, he argues that it is metaphysically necessary that if a person exists, she must be born to her parents; God does not choose one's parents with a roll of the dice. Second, being born into a specific society is also not improbable since a child will always be born into the society in which his parents live. Lastly, if that society is racist or sexist, Hales claims this is not improbable since most societies have some degree of racism or sexism (pp. 2391-2392).[24] Under the modal account, Hales also argues that these are not cases of luck since a person's social and genetic inheritances would be the same in nearby possible worlds, i.e. they are modally robust (p. 2392). Thus, on Hales' view, if a person exists, it is neither improbable nor modally non-robust that she is born to her parents with the genetic inheritances she has and in the particular society she is.

Hales' argument relies on what he calls "plausible Kripkean assumptions" about personal identity. On that view, proper names and indexicals like "you" are rigid designators – they refer to the same object in all possible worlds. In other words, they designate only the object that

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[24] This point would entail that one is lucky to be born into a society that is not racist or sexist.

actually exists in all possible worlds (Kripke, 1980, pp. 77-78). This means that there is no possible world where the "you" that refers to any particular person designates something other than that person as she *actually* exists, i.e. with the social and genetic inheritances she has. So, her identity is modally robust (the same in all possible worlds). Further, her identity is metaphysically necessary; she could not have been any other person than she actually is. So, the probability that she is who she is is 1.

While this view of personal identity that Hales subscribes to seems plausible to him and to many others in the analytic tradition, it is far from being universally accepted. Many others might instead endorse a Lockean or narrative[25] view of identity and find a Kripkean view to be highly counterintuitive. Though defending a view of personal identity lies far aside the scope of this project, I think it is reasonable to be skeptical about the view that Hales assumes. For on this view, it becomes very improbable that any person exists as she must be born of certain parents, in a certain place, at a certain time, and with the genetic inheritances she actually has. That a female with a very specific set of natural temperaments was born to my parents on March 1, 1987 in Maywood, IL is highly unlikely given the vast amount of possible temperaments, places, parents, and times in which a person could be born, male or female. Further, in this view of personal identity, Hales also assumes the truth of materialism, denying that there be any non-physical constituent of the self that is independent of the self that actually exists. Hales does not give us sufficient reason to accept it or to justify his confidence in such a view. If we reject Hales' Kripkean view of identity, we cast doubt on his view that our social and genetic inheritances do not meet a probability or modal condition.

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[25] See Schechtman (1996) or DeGrazia (2005) for discussion of the narrative view.

Hales objection to strict probability and modal accounts of luck affects not only probability or modal accounts, but hybrid accounts of luck that use either a probability or modal condition as well. He argues that hybrid accounts are no better at addressing the problem given that they include a probability or modal condition. Hales only mentions Peels as offering a hybrid account which goes as follows.

> According to Peels, an event E is lucky or unlucky for some person S at some time *t* iff (i) S lacks control over the occurrence of E at *t*, (ii) E is significant to S at *t*, and (iii) E occurs in the actual world, but not in a wide class of nearby possible worlds. All three conditions must be met for an event to be lucky (Hales, 2015, p.2394).

Hales argues that this definition does not count the cases of the social and genetic lotteries as lucky or unlucky since condition (iii) does not hold; one is born the same person under the same circumstances in nearby possible worlds. Thus, while the probability and modal accounts of luck might capture many instances of moral luck, they do not capture the case of character luck, according to Hales.

In the cases of genetic and social luck, we might maintain they are genuine cases of luck by rejecting his view of personal identity. Briefly put, these cases of moral luck, *contra* Hales, do meet the probability or modal condition since it is unlikely an individual is born into the exact circumstances she is given the range of possibilities. Later, I consider another problem that shows that these cases are ultimately not matter of luck, but fortune.

Hales suggests an alternate way to account for moral luck that does not rely on probability or modal robustness that is worth considering. He asks whether "luck" is ambiguous, meaning something different for cases of epistemic luck than for cases of moral luck. If we mean something different by "luck" when we refer to moral luck, then we don't need to worry if each case of moral luck does not satisfy all of the conditions of the general account. But, Hales rejects

this approach using the contradiction test to test for ambiguity in luck.[26] For example, the sentence "Fido is a dog, but not a dog" is syntactically contradictory, but if "dog" is ambiguous, semantic contradiction is escaped; Fido is of the species "dog," but not a male (p. 2398). But, "luck," Hales argues, does not fare the same way. He claims that you cannot say "Megan is lucky and unlucky"; it doesn't make sense. Even if she is lucky in different domains – say morally, but not epistemically lucky – the ambiguity does not work the same way as it does for the Fido example because it needs a context to be evaluable. It is analogous to saying "Tim won (at tennis), but did not win (at poker)"; "won" is not ambiguous, but simply refers to different contexts. Regardless of context, however, the Fido example involves an ambiguity (p. 2399).

If arguing that "luck" is ambiguous is the only way to save moral luck, then Hales concludes that "moral luck has no important role in ethics" (p. 2401); it becomes a dubitable concept since it does not fit under any proposed general account of luck and does not pass the ambiguity test. But, Hales' rejection of luck as ambiguous is too quick. For the analogy to tennis is not a good one. There, "won" refers to the same concept, but is simply applied to different games. By contrast, one can be lucky or unlucky in one domain and not another, each having different conditions for luck. So, calling someone epistemically lucky or unlucky will refer to something different than being morally lucky or lucky, and even being lucky or unlucky in other domains such as in sports or in winning the lottery. When it comes to moral luck, we are concerned only with cases that affect responsibility assignments, which will require the taking into account what an agent can reasonably be expected to know. But, in Hales' treatment of luck, he does not consider the epistemic condition for one's exercise of control: control requires, as I

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[26] Hales argues that of the available semantic tests for ambiguity, the contradiction test has been most highly endorsed. The test operates by looking at syntactically contradictory sentences that would avoid a semantic contradiction if the key term is truly ambiguous (2015, p. 2398).

have argued above, that one is able to make reliable predictions with respect to an event. It may be the case that calling an event an instance of luck requires the low probability of its occurrence or its modal non-robustness, as a meteorite striking the White House as Donald Trump assumes the presidency has a low probability and may not occur in nearby possible worlds where its course is slightly different causing it hit the Washington Monument instead. But, when it comes to moral luck, we consider the perspective of the agent and what she could reasonably predict. If the meteorite was in fact controlled by some sophisticated equipment invented by an advanced alien society and several members of Congress were aware of this fact and the plot to destroy the White House if Trump were ever to enter it as President, then those members of Congress could be held responsible for not informing the relevant people to protect the president's life (either praised or blamed or held accountable for keeping the information to themselves). Knowledge of such a bizarre conspiracy, however, would not be something anyone would reasonably be expected to have. So, if no human was aware of such a conspiracy, no human being would be (even partially) responsible for the attack, even though it was a carefully planned and thus a probable and modally robust event. In other words, a planned attack makes it a likely occurrence and one that would occur in nearby possible worlds and thus plans that are successfully executed are not a matter of luck. But, given that we would not reasonably expect someone to be in a position to predict such a bizarre occurrence, it would be still be a matter of luck relative to what a person knows and so would affect responsibility assignments. Because we consider what can be known by the individual, moral luck differs in a significant way from other types of luck, and so "luck" is an ambiguous term.

Perhaps it will be better to use an example that is more ordinary. It is courageous when a firefighter enters a burning building to save someone trapped inside. It requires the right amount

of fear and confidence, as well as the knowledge of how to navigate a burning building and find someone through the smoke and flames. In some cases, a firefighter uses all of her knowledge to discern a safe path to the victim and out of the building, yet something goes wrong, trapping both people inside and causing them to die. It may be the case that had the firefighter known every single fact about the particular house – the state of the house's foundation prior to the fire, what the house's ventilation was like, how many dirty, flammable rags there were at a point that could ignite the fire enough to make the house collapse, etc. – she might have been able to deduce that another entry would have allowed her to successfully save the victim and herself. But, no one would reasonably expect her to know every single possible factor that would lead to her failure. Her expertise allows her to discern a many of these factors, though not all of them. And although there may be a chain of causal events that could make the entranceway's collapsing at the time it did likely, full knowledge of all causal factors is simply too high of a standard to use to judge responsibility. Instead, we rely on some reasonable standard we judge based on the situation and availability of knowledge. Had the firefighter's miscalculation been caused by her negligence in evaluating the relative safety of entering the house where she did, we would not consider it bad luck that the house collapsed once she entered it. But, since she took into account all that she could when she entered the way that she did, she has simply experienced some bad luck and would not be blameworthy.

In light of these examples, we can see how an event might be predictable if one had all the information concerning it, but still a matter of moral luck because it does not meet the control condition. Part of what is needed in order to exercise epistemic control is to be in a position to make reliable predictions with respect to an event. This mean that the standards by which we judge control must be relative to the perspective of the agent since control requires that one has

the knowledge needed to reliably effect or predict the consequences of an event. If something is improbable or modally non-robust, one will not be in a position to reliably make accurate predictions with respect to it. Yet, something might be probable or modally robust all things considered, but unpredictable based on how a person's particular position affects her calculations and thus outside of her control. Had she been aware of all of the relevant information concerning the event, she may have been able to predict its occurrence, but she is only held responsible for what she could have been reasonably expected to know given the evidence that's available to her and the time she had to consider it in her deliberation. Thus, "luck" must be ambiguous. It does not merely rely on a context to be evaluated as "winning" in tennis and not in poker does. One is morally lucky or unlucky when we consider how much control she can exercise with respect to some significant event. This requires that we also consider the epistemic aspect of the control condition. Other instances of luck, such as whether Rajai Davis will hit his only postseason homerun to tie the game with two outs in the 8th inning in game seven of the World Series, do not rely on whether the agent can make accurate predictions himself. It is because moral luck is luck that affects responsibility that it must take into account a person's ability to make predictions with respect to her choices.

To formalize how moral luck is relative to one's perspective, I return to the control condition defined earlier in this chapter. There, I argued that having epistemic control required that:

> A has the relevant knowledge with respect to B that allows A to gather information needed to either (a) reliably affect B (i.e. reliably start, stop, or continue B) or (b) predict the consequences of A's action with respect to B.

In this definition, part (a) refers to one's effective control – one's ability to act in ways that affect B. Part (b) refers to one's epistemic control – one's knowledge needed to make predictions with

respect to B. Including (b) in this definition requires that moral luck is relative to an agent's perspective since a person cannot exercise control if she is unable to make predictions given the information she has. So, in order to understand what is predictable relative to a person's perspective, we need to understand what would allow a person to make predictions concerning an event. I propose three conditions for calling something predictable relative to an agent: (1) A has access to information sufficient for making accurate predictions with respect to B, (2) A has the time needed to utilize all information needed for making accurate predictions with respect to B in her deliberations, and (3) A has the cognitive ability sufficient for deliberating with respect to B.

Only in cases where all three conditions are met can an event be said to have been predictable relative to the agent. If any of these three cases cannot be met, then the event will meet control condition for luck. Consider a scenario where our firefighter does not meet the first two conditions. In the example I gave, she took into consideration all that she could when making her decision to enter where she did, but she may not have had access to all information that would have allowed her to make a more accurate prediction, such as any unique feature of the house or its contents that would have thwarted her efforts. So she would not have met condition (1). In cases of fires, there is often a limit to the time one has to deliberate since immediate action is needed. Perhaps if our firefighter had a few more minutes she would have had time to perform an exhaustive evaluation that would have caught some details changing her course of action to a more effective one. So, condition (2) is also not met. In this case, we assume condition (3) is met since she is a trained firefighter, but there are often cases where (1) and (2) are met, but (3) is not. These cases may involve a cognitive handicap caused by a mental disability or in cases where a person is simply not trained to be able to pick out the relevant

information and use it to deliberate. In the latter case, we can point to a bystander who is observing the fire. While he may have access to the information by virtue of his proximity to observable facts, and he may have the time needed to utilize that information, he would lack the cognitive ability to do so since he is not trained to fight fires. Another reason a person might not meet condition (3) is if he is in an emotional state that interferes with his cognitive processing. Perhaps our firefighter routinely displays courage in the face of fires, but is too distressed to concentrate when she is putting out a fire in her own home or in the home of someone close to her. In cases like these, we might say that the circumstances overstrain human nature, making it too difficult for a person to exercise her cognitive capacities. In some cases of character luck, a person's upbringing may inhibit her moral awareness, making it difficult for her to morally deliberate even if she has access to the moral facts (such as witnessing another's suffering) and time to deliberate.

Compare our firefighter to another person who would have met all three conditions and thus would have been in a better position to know that the building was to collapse when it did. A firefighter who not only knows the general laws concerning fires, but who also has specialized knowledge of the building and time enough to deliberate could potentially meet all three conditions. Being near the building when the fire started and having previous knowledge of its particular architecture, the wood, or even the flammable contents of the home that would make some rooms more dangerous to enter than others, would all be significant factors putting him in a better position to judge when the building might collapse and where the best point of entry would be. Thus, he satisfies condition (1) since he has access to more information regarding the building's architecture and the home's contents. He may have more time to deliberate if he was present at the moment the fire started, meeting condition (2). And, as a fellow firefighter, he

would satisfy condition (3) by virtue of his expertise in fighting fires. His ability to predict the

building's collapsing would be much greater than our first firefighter's ability and thus he would

be less likely to suffer from bad luck.

In cases of predictability that are relative to a person's perspective, we often express our

frustration at our epistemic shortcomings or our understanding of others' shortcomings when we

say things like "If only I had known…" or "It's not your fault. How could you have known?" In

these cases, we recognize that something might have be predictable had we been aware of all the

facts ahead of time, but that life is such that we often do not operate with full knowledge of all

the causal mechanisms at play. When our ignorance of those factors is not our fault, we are

dealing with cases of moral and epistemic luck. There is moral luck because we were not

operating with full control in morally significant matters given that we are not in the best

position to make accurate predictions about the world. And there is epistemic luck because our

knowledge is affected by factors outside of our control of which we could not reasonably be

expected to be aware. When we assign moral responsibility, we take into account what the agent

could reasonably be expected to know and thus the conditions for luck are judged according to

the perspective of the agent.[27]

In his line of argument against the significance condition for luck, Duncan Pritchard

attacks the approach to luck that takes into account a subject's construal of luck. He claims that

"our interest ought to be in luck as an objective feature of events, which means that we should be

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[27] Compare to Latus' claim that luck is perspectival; it may be a matter of chance relative to what you can reasonably expect, but not relative to what someone else knows (2003, pp. 468-469). Rescher also claims that luck is "a matter of those goods and bads that befall us purely by chance, in a way that is unforeseen, unplanned for, and unexpected – *at any rate by the agent herself*" (2014, p. 621, my emphasis). My account specifies that this is particularly true in cases of moral luck since responsibility is involved.

wary about drawing too many conclusions from agents' subjective judgements about luck" (2014, p. 604). Pritchard argues that calling an event lucky or unlucky points to features of its occurrence that are (for Pritchard) modally non-robust.[28] But, moral luck cannot leave out the subject's construal since we are not making a claim about the event *per se*, but about the subject's decision-making procedure that relied on the event's occurrence or non-occurrence. This is clear in cases of luck that involve force or where the results of one's decision were unforeseeable.[29] In other cases of luck, such as character luck, one's decisions are affected by factors that lie outside of one's control, such as her natural temperaments and upbringing. Admittedly, character luck is a little different from other types of luck and so I treat it in its own right in the following section. Leaving aside the special complexities of character luck until the next section, for now I just conclude that moral luck requires that we take into account the perspective of the agent and what she can reasonably predict.

III. Moral Luck and Character Luck

While we have made the transition from a general account of luck to moral luck by showing that in cases of moral luck, luck is relative to an agent's perspective. But, we have not addressed all the problems with moral luck yet. For as we move from moral luck in general to character luck, we see that this particular type of moral luck comes with its own baggage. Hales argues that it is neither improbable that someone is born to her parents in the society in which they reside, nor does she have different natural temperaments, residency, or parents in nearby possible worlds. Thus, on his view, cases of character luck do not seem to meet all conditions for luck on any hybrid view that is put forth in the luck literature. In section two, I expressed

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[28] We may instead say improbable, if that should be the correct account.

[29] In section three, I discuss the different types of moral luck in more detail.

skepticism concerning the view of personal identity that Hales assumes in his argument and argued that he must provide more defense for this view. But, there is another concern for character luck that arises: who or what is lucky or unlucky to have been born with certain social and genetic inheritances? Before responding to this objection, let us take stock of the different types of moral luck and how other types are more easily analyzed on a general account of luck than character luck.

As I have noted above, Thomas Nagel assumes a control account of luck. He defines moral luck, saying, "where a significant aspect of what someone does depends on factors beyond his control, yet we continue to treat him in that respect as an object of moral judgment, it can be called moral luck… good or bad" (Nagel, 1979, p. 59). He then famously divides moral luck into four types, as the quote below explains. In what follows, I will discuss his four types in light of the view of moral luck that considers how the different instances are outside of an agent's control, significant, and unpredictable. Nagel says of the four types:

> There are roughly four ways in which the natural objects of moral assessment are disturbingly subject to luck. One is the phenomenon of constitutive luck – the kind of person you are, where this is not just a question of what you deliberately do, but of your inclinations, capacities, and temperament. Another category is luck in one's circumstances – the kind of problems and situations one faces. The other two have to do with the causes and effects of action: luck in how one is determined by antecedent circumstances, and luck in the way one's actions and projects turn out (*Ibid*., p. 60).

We can call the latter two types of luck causal and resultant. Causal luck involves some kind of force that determines one's behavior by either overriding or bypassing one's deliberative process. It is a matter of moral luck that someone perform some forced action when she could not have predicted that her action would be forced, it was outside of her control, and has significance for her insofar as it causes her to act contrary to how she would have acted otherwise. There may be cases where a person's action is forced in a predictable way. If someone

is a slave, for instance, she may be routinely forced to do terrible things for her master and, after some time, can reasonably expect to be forced to do something terrible. Thus, her forced acts do not meet the predictability condition. This case shows that not all cases of being forced are matters of moral luck. It may be the case that the slave suffered bad moral and prudential luck in her becoming a slave, but subsequent events, although terrible, do not inherit that luck. So while her becoming a slave might be a matter of bad moral luck, her performing a routine terrible action is not bad moral luck, but simply a forced or involuntary action, warranting pity and exculpation. The assignments of responsibility (or lack thereof) are similar, though the reasons for pity and exculpation differ.

Resultant luck occurs when the consequences of an agent's action are impeded in ways that are outside of her control, unpredictable, and significant. Thus, consider the case of my accidentally scratching a friend and giving him an infection during the pickup basketball game that I mentioned above. This is a case of resultant luck since his getting a ticket on the way to his doctor visit was not a foreseeable consequence of getting a cut. Hence it was a matter of bad resultant luck that my scratching him caused him to get a ticket.

Circumstantial luck can be broadly divided into two categories. The first category has to do with the kinds of situations an agent faces. This type of circumstantial luck affects an agent and her decisions by posing her with situations she did not choose, but within which she must act. Thus a person faces bad circumstantial luck if she decides to make a deposit at her bank at the same time a burglar decides to take everyone at the bank hostage until he successfully commits his robbery. It is unlikely, and thus unpredictable, that someone will be at the bank at the time it is robbed and the robbery is something clearly outside of the patron's control. This is also obviously a significant event for the woman. Thus, she experiences bad circumstantial luck

of the first kind. Other cases of bad circumstantial luck consider alternate possible worlds, such as if I were a young German man at the time Hitler was in power, and question whether I would have acted in morally problematic ways. In these cases, one may simply have been lucky to not have been faced with such circumstances that are outside of her control and significant, and where the level of horror and involvement in such terrible crimes was unpredictable.[30]

The second category of circumstantial luck is of more concern for this chapter. This category has to do with the circumstances into which you are born, which affect the kind of character you develop. Hales' criticism applies to this and the following type of luck. It is far outside of anyone's control and very significant which circumstances one is born in. Very good circumstances – good parents, access to a good education, living in a city with low crime rates, etc. – give a person a significant advantage when it comes to developing a good character. Having good examples and not being morally challenged to the point of overstrain, such as how a poor child in a rough neighborhood might be challenged in being honest or not stealing, are the kinds of circumstances that can help a child develop virtue at a reasonable pace. By contrast, developing in very bad circumstances can have lasting effects. A person who grows up in a racist society will have difficulty overcoming her racial biases even after she consciously disavows them, as the empirical literature on implicit biases indicate.[31]

While one's circumstances meet the control and significance conditions, Hales questions whether they are improbable or modally non-robust. Similarly, the final type of luck is targeted in Hales' criticism.

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[30] See Hanna (2014) for discussion on whether these types of (un)lucky cases are genuinely problems for responsibility.

[31] I dedicate chapter five to the treatment of implicit bias and other empirical literature that poses a challenge to our traditional understanding of character, control, and awareness.

Character luck involves the kinds of genetic and social inheritances one has as well as one's natural temperaments. Genetic inheritances refer to the kinds of natural temperaments with which one is born. Being inhibited, for example, can make it difficult for one to develop a trait where she is generous to strangers in face to face situations because her shyness might be too big of an obstacle to overcome. Social inheritances refer to the kinds of circumstances into which a person is born such as the moral goodness or badness of her parents and the moral code they pass on to their children, the prevalent social attitudes of her society, the conventional moral code of the time and place in which she is developing, and the other factors surrounding her circumstances that were mentioned above as the second kind of circumstantial luck. Natural temperaments broadly refer to any natural dispositions one has either from birth[32] or that develop over time as a result of physical changes. For example, as a person ages, she may find it easier to be temperate on account of a weakened appetite. Because these factors are outside of a person's control and significant insofar as they affect her character development and maintenance, these are treated as paradigmatic cases of moral luck.

Whether these factors are improbable or modally non-robust is debated: Hales for one concludes they are not. He argues that if what causes my temperaments can potentially be explained by certain genetic predispositions inherited from by parents, then it is not luck that I have those temperaments. Further, he argues that if it is also not improbable or modally non-robust that I am born into the society in which my parents reside, then the type of circumstantial luck that affects character luck is also ruled out. By contrast, in response to the challenge that one's genetic inheritances are not a matter of luck, Neil Levy argues that the lack of modal

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[32] See Kagan (1994) on the temperaments that are observed in babies.

robustness should be measured not in terms of the agent's traits varying across possible worlds, but the variation amongst all people in the human population taken as a whole (2009, p. 496). He claims that one should ask whether it is unlikely that any human inherit a happy temperament rather than whether this human was born with a happy temperament in nearby possible worlds. While this line of argument addresses the modal condition, it winds up being unsatisfactory. For it is not clear that anything other than congenital defects would count as (un)lucky traits. Perhaps the odds are low that anyone inherit a positive (i.e., virtue-conducive) temperament like cheerfulness or being uninhibited. But, it's not clear this is the case. Even so, it seems that a great deal of the natural temperaments with which we are born are not rare, yet these are paradigmatic cases of moral luck. Levy's response, then, does not address the concern that our natural temperaments are instances of moral luck. Instead, his response narrows the field so much that it leaves out the paradigmatic cases of character luck. In section II, I argued that these are indeed improbable and modally non-robust insofar as there are many possible temperaments, societies, eras, and parents with which one might be blessed (or cursed).

Still, some philosophers argue that there may be some other phenomenon at work here that is related to, but distinct from, luck. I have argued in section I that for an event to be considered a matter of luck, it must meet the control condition. This requires that a person lacks effective control over starting, stopping, or continuing a process and that she lacks epistemic control in knowing enough to start, stop, or continue a process and knowing enough to make predictions or plans in relation to an event. Morally significant events must meet the control condition to be genuine instances of moral luck.[33] But, significant conditions or circumstances,

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[33] I have left open whether there are other necessary and sufficient conditions, aside from lack of control and significance, that determine whether something is morally lucky or unlucky.

such as one's social and genetic inheritances, that are far outside of an agent's effective control are still matters over which we can exercise some epistemic control. For while I may not have had effective control over the kind of temperaments or social inheritances I have, I can exercise epistemic control with respect to them by making plans or predictions in relation to them. For example, I can engage in activities that can offset my naturally irritable temperament. Some philosophers suggest we call cases that involve general conditions of one's life rather than chancy events matters of moral good or bad fortune rather than luck. On my analysis, we can say that they are close to cases of moral luck since they meet the effective control and significance conditions, but because they do not meet the epistemic condition for lack of control, they fall under a different concept. Similarly, Rescher claims, "Luck is a matter of having something good or bad happen that lies outside the horizon of effective foreseeability. There is thus a significant difference between luck and fortune. You are fortunate if something good happens for you in the natural course of things… fate and fortune relate to the conditions and circumstances of our lives generally, luck to the specifically chancy goods and evils that befall us" (1995, p. 28). Compare to Coffman's claim: "You can be fortunate with respect to an event whose occurrence was extremely likely, whereas an event is lucky for you only if there was a significant chance the event wouldn't occur" (2007, p. 392).[34] The difference between cases of luck and fortune applies to differences between events and conditions of one's life. For an event can be predictable or unpredictable, but some of the general conditions of a person's life, such as her social or genetic inheritances or her natural temperaments, are important features of her life that lie outside of her control and are significant, but are not matters of luck since one can make plans and predictions

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[34] See Coffman (2014, p. 502) and Riggs (2014, p. 630) who also draw these distinctions between luck and fortune.

with respect to them. Natural temperaments that accompany age are not unpredictable since they are common changes that occur as one ages.

The distinction between luck and fortune helps to make an important clarification concerning character luck. While it seems that out of all the possible natural temperaments and social environments, a person is lucky to have been born with those conducive to forming virtue, this is not the case since these are conditions in relation to which one can make predictions or plans. So, we may be fortunate, but not lucky, to be born with certain natural endowments. Still, both fortune and luck affect responsibility assignments. For we are not responsible for having a bad natural temperament, but we can be responsible for not working to offset or change out bad temperament when we have the capacity to do so. Further, character luck includes not just being fortunate with respect to one's genetic inheritances or natural temperaments, but the coincidence between these and one's circumstances. For example, a person may be naturally submissive to the authority of her parents and her natural submissiveness may not be a matter of luck, but fortune, since it is a general condition of her life. But, whether or not she has good parents will affect whether her natural submissiveness leads to virtue or vice. Similarly, a person who is naturally disengaged from others might be lucky to develop in circumstances where keeping his distance from others is what is best, such as in a place where most people he encounters are vicious.

So, while we might call it a matter of fortune that a person has a certain temperament, we can call her lucky if she develops in circumstances most conducive to developing virtue for a person of her temperament. Thus, character luck is a genuine instance of luck when we consider one's temperament and upbringing together. I will thus continue to use the expression "character

luck" when I consider all that contributes to a person's character, though I recognize that one's natural temperaments and social inheritances are matters of fortune, not luck.

IV. Character Luck and Responsibility

In the previous section, I addressed some concerns about character luck and the type of circumstantial luck that affects character luck, showing how they differ from the other types of luck: causal and resultant. Here, I consider some views about the uniqueness of character luck compared to the other three types of luck that suggest how one might still be responsible for her character despite the presence of luck. In other words, while cases of causal and resultant luck remove assignments of responsibility, cases of character luck do not always do so. If character luck was incompatible with responsibility, luck would be too pervasive to make responsibility possible.[35] The following are the main reasons these accounts give to treat character luck differently: character has a more internal nature,[36] one's natural temperaments can be active states,[37] one can act out of character,[38] and one can take responsibility for who she is in a forward-looking sense of responsibility.[39] I treat each of the views in turn, raising some concerns for them before I present my own view.

Before I begin, I will first say a few things about responsibility, as there are several accounts defended and which may have different implications. Here, I avoid difficult questions of free will and determinism, as these are beyond the scope of this project. But, I do assume that

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[35] Bernard Williams, for one, sets character luck aside because he claims it "affects everything" (1981, p. 40).

[36] (Sher, 2001)

[37] (Trianosky, 1993)

[38] (Moody-Adams, 1993) or (Nelkin, 2014)

[39] (Card, 1996)

any account that denies there is anything for which we can be held responsible is false. For this requires that one is an error theorist about responsibility such that no application of the concept of responsibility is accurate. In other words, one would have to hold that every ascription of responsibility is mistaken. I, by contrast, assume that responsibility is rightly applied in some cases. The view that no one could rightfully be held responsible is a minority one that is very much contrary to the moral practices of almost every society. So, I do not think this to be an unreasonable assumption. For my purposes, I do not here endorse any positive accounts of free will, but follow a traditional understanding of responsibility to require exercise of control and awareness. Thus a person who either lacks control over her action or is (excusably) unaware that the action she is performing is a bad one would not be held responsible for the act.[40]

To further specify the control condition for responsibility, one should take into account the empirical literature that presents a challenge to our typical intuitions about the amount of control we exercise. Several studies in the last century have indicated that the behavior of ordinary people is significantly influenced by minor situational factors rather than by any robust character trait or reflective deliberative process. For instance, helping behavior tends to be increased if one is in a better mood, which is reliably affected by minor things such as being

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[40] Though I do not defend the view here, I do think a moderate view of responsibility is most plausible, which would involve a modest level of control and awareness to be necessary for responsibility, understood as being worthy of praise or blame. Thus, my view falls somewhere between a strong libertarian view and a compatibilist account. The former requires high standards of freedom for responsibility (see Kane (2003)), and the latter eliminates the control condition and focuses on the positive or negative or quality of will. For some examples, see Frankfurt (1971) or Arpaly (2006). See also Doris (2002 & 2015) who eliminates the self-awareness condition. Still, since my view is moderate, I leave it up to the libertarian or compatibilist to adjust the levels of control or awareness necessary for responsibility, if they can come to reasonable conclusions about standard practices for assigning responsibility and take into account the growing empirical literature that challenges these notions, as I do.

around good smells,[41] low or moderate ambient noise,[42] or finding a dime in a phone booth.[43]

Generous behavior has been shown to be manipulated by displaying pictures of eyes nearby, suggesting that people behave generously when they are reminded they may be seen and should act to maintain reputation.[44] These studies challenge our intuitions about how much control we tend to exercise since morally significant behavior can be manipulated by morally irrelevant factors. In other words, much of our behavior does not seem to be freely chosen or the result of an abiding character, but is most influenced by insignificant situational factors.

In order to address the problems of limited control, we must modify this condition in order to establish a realistic conception of responsibility. Thus, I assume that the traditional account of responsibility will rely on modest conditions of control and awareness. Rather than requiring full control or awareness over one's actions, assigning responsibility should just require that a person exercise some amount of control and awareness. The amount of control ought to be somewhere in the area of meeting the conditions for control outlined early on in this chapter: being able to exercise effective control and having epistemic control over an event. When it comes to the situational factors that unconsciously affect a person's behavior, she is responsible for her behavior if she can choose to help or not to help and has knowledge of what

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[41] (Baron, 1997)

[42] (Mathews and Cannon, 1975, p. 575)

[43] (Levin and Isen, 1972).

[44] The "watching eyes" phenomenon has been found in different contexts. In a game where participants had to decide how much of a windfall they'd share with another, the presence of eyes increased generosity (Haley and Fessler, 2005). Increase in generosity was also found in another game where participants had to decide how much to contribute to a communal pot (Burnham and Hare, 2007). Increased donations to a communal pot used to replenish the milk supply in an office were found when a picture of watching eyes were nearby (Bateson et al, 2006). Decreased littering in a cafeteria correlated with the picture of eyes (Ernest-Jones et al, 2011).

kinds of behavior (that she can control) will result in helping. Even if her helping behavior is partially (or significantly) influenced by irrelevant factors such as good smells, she is still responsible for her behavior since it is not coerced. The amount of awareness one has will be affected by one's access to moral knowledge. For example, a person developing in a deeply racist society will be less responsible (if at all) for her racist attitudes compared to a person developing in modern American society. Further, being aware of all the minor influences on one's behavior is not necessary for being held responsible for it. When a person is not aware of these influences, she might still be responsible for her behavior since she still exercises awareness of the act she is performing and its significance. Only when she lacks the awareness of these two things, as the person born into a racist society might, would she be exculpated.

I acknowledge that I am glossing over many difficult details about responsibility and that I do not provide hard and fast rules to be applied in any particular case where moral responsibility is at issue. Instead, I am merely appealing to an account of responsibility that I believe both aligns with common intuitions and practices of assigning responsibility and fits with the available empirical data. I do this for two reasons. First, I do not think it possible to provide a precise account of responsibility that has the flexibility to work with the variable moral experiences characteristic of our lives. Second, my main goal in this chapter and dissertation is not to provide a defense for these conditions. Instead, I focus on how responsibility for character and what follows from it is still intelligible according to them. To do this, I consider the common approach to responsibility and indicate where it might be modified without completely undermining it or suggesting radical revision. The goal is to show that despite the presence of luck or fortune, we can still be held responsible for many things in a meaningful sense.

With some preliminary remarks about responsibility in place, we can see how the difficulty of responsibility for character arises. For we lack significant control over the factors that inform our character development and the circumstances in which we develop can impede our awareness. In what follows, I consider some of the ways philosophers have argued that we can still be held responsible for our characters despite the pervasiveness of character luck. The upshot of this discussion is that developing a broader account of responsibility helps us to understand how to assign responsibility in ordinary cases.

1. Sher on blame for traits. George Sher argues that blame for character traits does not require control over the development of the traits – which we clearly do not have to a large extent – because blame only requires the absence of some external impediment, such as being coerced or ignorant of the facts surrounding one's choice or act. Since character traits are internal to us, Sher claims we are rightly blamed for them as they are not an external impediment that would exculpate an agent. He says,

> [T]he agent's failure to accord the proper weight to moral reasons reflects badly on him because it can be traced to some feature of his own deliberative activity rather than some external factor that impedes or constrains that activity. There are, of course, many hard questions about how to draw the line between what is internal to an agent and what is not; but their answers are not important here. Instead, what matters is simply that the very acts over which we are most inclined to say an agent lacks control are also the acts whose wrongness or badness we are most inclined to attribute to external factors (Sher, 2001, p. 151).

Sher thinks that someone is blameworthy if she deserves blame, that is, if an attitude such as indignation, disgust, or disappointment is rightly directed at her (p. 155). When someone's moral failure is on account of her decision-making process, Sher thinks she is rightly blamed (p. 150). But, Sher also claims that blame is a wider category than responsibility or punishment; someone who is blameworthy may not necessarily be held responsible or punished for her blameworthy

trait (p. 157). A person might be blamed for things he was responsible for and for which he deserves punishment, but this does not mean that because he is rightly blamed, he was responsible for the trait or should be punished.

According to Sher, responsibility can be for good or bad things, but blame is only for bad things. So they have a different structure (p. 157). Sher understands responsibility more than simply being "subject to praise or blame," but as having a causal relation to a thing. Since people do not have a causal relation to the development of their traits, they are not responsible for them. Sher narrows the scope of causal responsibility to that which has causes rooted in one's will or reasons for an act. Since a person doesn't have a certain kind of character on account of her own reasons, she is not responsible for her character. So, Sher concludes that one can be blamed for bad traits, but not responsible for them (p. 158).

Sher's view is severely limited in a couple ways. First, it does not address the worry that traits having external sources, such that being influenced by one's circumstances or being born with a temperament one did not choose, are not internal expressions of a person. In other words, one can distinguish between traits that were chosen by one and traits that develop unconsciously within someone. The former have internal causes while the latter have external causes.

Sher secondly does not distinguish between being bad and being blameworthy. One might objectively have a bad character insofar as she has naturally vicious traits,[45] but if she is ignorant of those traits or of the moral significance of them (say due to mental deficiency or bad circumstantial status), she does not seem to be blameworthy for those traits just because they are

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[45] I insert "naturally" here to call to mind the distinction Aristotle makes between natural and full virtue or vice. The former appeal to one's appetitive inclinations or temperament while the latter require that one consciously choose to habituate those traits (*EN*, 1144b4-10). More on this distinction in chapter four.

internal to her. On the modest standards of control and awareness that I proposed above, we can uphold this distinction between bad and blameworthy traits by considering whether a person exercised a reasonable amount of control in developing her natural traits[46] into virtue (and thus, for the actions that spring from her traits) and whose awareness is not impeded by poor circumstances.

      2. Moody-Adams on acting out of character. Michele Moody-Adams defends the view that "part of being human is having the capacity to act out of character – even in spite of one's character – should doing the morally right thing, or any other circumstance, require this" (Moody-Adams, 1993, p. 111). She argues that our ability to act out of character grounds our responsibility for our actions.

      Acting out of character, however, seems to require an awareness that is also subject to character luck. For a person may have developed under circumstances that limit her capacity to develop virtue or perform virtuous actions by impeding on her moral awareness. Similarly, Susan Wolf argues that a person's upbringing can prevent her from recognizing the need to mend her character (1987, p. 58). Wolf argues that this happens either because a person grew up where the wrong values were encouraged, as in the case of American slave-owners or German Nazis in the 1930s, or because a person has a rough childhood and has trouble revising or avoiding deeply rooted ideals that lead to serious wrongdoings, as in the case of an abused child who grows up and commits violent crimes.

      Moody-Adams acknowledges this objection and in response she first claims that the case of the Nazis or slave-owners is implausible. Rather than an inability to see their behavior as

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[46] These statements about one's ordinary character and responsibility will be argued for at length in chapters four and five where I derive that account from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Politics*.

wrong, these people demonstrated an unwillingness to consider that they might be wrong. Further, she thinks this approach makes both the oppressors and the oppressed into victims without adequately distinguishing them. So, she rejects this as a plausible case where responsibility might be mitigated (p.122).

Second, in response to the case of the abused child, Moody-Adams claims that we may mitigate our moral responses towards those who are victims of their circumstances, but that these people are not free from being held responsible for wrongdoings. For it would not be fair to exculpate someone for harming an innocent person just because she had a bad upbringing. We might extend mercy or forgiveness to a person who suffered a bad upbringing, but this does not mean she is not blameworthy for her wrongdoing. Further, Moody-Adams argues that having a trait does not necessitate action; one might have a strong bad impulse, but this does not mean that impulse is irresistible (p. 123). In other words, character is not destiny; one may exercise a strong act of will to overcome her character-driven bad inclination that developed from her bad upbringing. And so, Moody-Adams thinks that everyone has the capacity to act out of character. In fact, she argues that treating one as lacking such a capacity is denying him or her a humanity since it takes the person outside of the realm of moral responsibility and treats her as merely a passive victim to circumstance (p. 125).

In the second type of case that Moody-Adams considers, the acting out of character might also be described as being self-controlled, i.e., when a person desires the wrong thing, but persists in right action. There are certainly times when this is the case and a person overcomes her bad character or inclination in order to do something good. Further, as we shall see in chapter three, on an Aristotelian account of responsibility, one is not only responsible for actions stemming from her character, but for actions that are voluntary if she is capable of choice. So, I

do not disagree with Moody-Adams in the cases where a person has developed poor inclinations, but recognizes that her actions are wrong and performs them anyways. In these cases, a person's moral awareness is not impeded by her upbringing, though she has developed strong desires for the wrong things.

But, Moody-Adams dismissal of the first type of case where a person has developed the wrong ideals and cannot see her behavior as wrong is too quick. For she focuses on German Nazis and American slave-owners, which are extreme cases that may be easier to challenge than other cases falling under the same type. Consider, for instance, the difference between an American slave-owner who holds racist beliefs about African Americans and on the basis of those beliefs justifies causing great physical harm to his African American slaves, and a person who lives in an all-white, slave-free community who holds similar racist beliefs as the slave-owner and on the basis of those beliefs using offensive language when referring to African Americans. The former person may be unwilling, rather than unable, to see his actions as wrong given his experience of the suffering of his slaves by his own hand. It is implausible to think that one could not recognize his wrongdoing when watching the pain inflicted on another. The latter person, however, does not have access to the kind of evidence that would challenge his belief in the inferiority of a certain race since his offensive language is used only in the presence of others who believe it is not offensive. If he were to witness the beating of slaves or be corrected by an African American when using offensive language and still resist correction, then we might call him unwilling rather than unable to see his behavior as wrong.[47]

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[47] This example draws on Thomas Carson's ethical analysis of the character of Abraham Lincoln (2015).

In brief, while Moody-Adams is right to recognize that responsibility for actions is not always derived from character, she fails to recognize cases where one's upbringing impedes one's moral awareness.

3. Trianosky on active temperaments. Gregory Trianosky rejects two premises he takes to be characteristic of Kantian views of agential credit:[48] that moral virtue must be to the credit of an agent (i.e., an agent must have the correct motivations) and that natural affections, can be praised, but are not to the credit of the moral agent (Trianosky, 1993, pp. 94-95). His rejection of these premises relies on his understanding that credit only requires that a person's character is virtuous and she is primarily responsible for it (p. 95). So, for example, if a person develops a virtue because she is naturally malleable and happened to have good parents, she will not deserve credit for it since she is not primarily responsible for the development of her virtue – her parents are. By contrast, if a person is naturally generous, the generous character she develops as a result is to her credit since she is primarily responsible for it. Unlike being malleable, the person with a generous temperament actively discriminates between values (p. 96).

In order to understand Trianosky's view, I focus on his view of credit. Trianosky claims there are three necessary and sufficient conditions for assigning credit to an agent:

(1) The trait must be a praiseworthy one.
(2) The trait must have the content it does primarily because of the agent's active discrimination rather than the discriminations made by others.
(3) Reference to the value-making features of the trait (or of what it aims at) must figure essentially and fairly directly in the explanation of why the trait is developed and maintained (*Ibid.*).

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[48] Trianosky distinguishes between credit and praise. The former is the seat of responsibility and occurs when one does an action for the sake of duty, not because of any inclination. The latter can be given to any admirable trait despite its genesis or whether it develops uncritically from one's upbringing or is a part of one's natural temperament (p. 94).

Premise (1) is straight forward; we only receive credit for good traits. In explanation of (2), Trianosky claims that agency must be involved in the shaping of one's character either through one's will or by having any active temperament (pp. 97-98). The former is not as controversial – it seems plausible that one is reasonably held responsible for what one freely chooses to become part of her character. The latter is more controversial; it claims that one can be held responsible for our character if it is caused by a temperament that involves actively discriminating among ends. In other words, when a person's natural temperament consists of elements that express a value, she is responsible for the character she develops because she and no one else is the cause of it even if her valuing of that end is not the result of her own reflective processes. By contrast, when a person's natural temperament is passive, he is not the author of the character that he develops since he merely accepts whatever values are presented to him. For instance, a person who is naturally naïve or malleable might habituate the virtue generosity because she has had the good luck of a good upbringing, but she does not deserve credit for her virtuous state since its habituation was possible only on account of her passivity (p. 98). In other words, her malleable trait does not consist of any element that indicates that she values being generous or performing generous actions. Its relation to generosity is accidental; it is the result of her being lucky to have had good parents and to have had a malleable temperament so that she accepts whatever values they say she should. By contrast, another person may be naturally inclined towards generosity. This is an active state because it discriminates among ends; she chooses those actions that express her generosity because she is motivated by helping others rather than merely pleasing her generosity-loving parents (pp. 98-99). Thus, a person can be responsible for a character developing from an active temperament: the active temperament can act as an explanatory factor

as to why a person develops one trait over another because it is based on the content of that trait rather than who happens to favor the trait (p. 100).

Trianosky uses condition (3) to further describe the differences between the malleable and naturally generous person. The malleable person chooses to be generous only to satisfy the wishes of her parents. If she had bad parents, she could have just as easily developed vices on account of her natural malleability (p. 101). In other words, she may become generous not because she values helping others, but because she happened to have good parents. By contrast, the naturally generous person chooses to develop traits that benefit others *because* they benefit others; there is an essential connection between the trait and why she chooses it, even if the reason she chooses it is due to her natural temperament (p. 102).

In sum, Trianosky argues that responsibility for character makes sense despite the fact that our temperaments are not under our control when those temperaments are active. In this way, responsibility for character is different than responsibility for actions since it does not require voluntariness. Rather, it is because a person is the author of her character and not someone else that makes her responsible for it. When a person has a passive temperament, she does not stand in the same relation to her subsequent character as a person with an active temperament, according to Trianosky, because she is not primarily involved in forming her character (p.106). From this discussion, Trianosky concludes, "perhaps we may agree that an innocent truism is as respectable a virtue as its more formal Kantian counterpart" (p. 108).

Trianosky's view acknowledges the fact that our characters develop on account of a host of factors over which we do not control, such as our natural temperaments, and in some cases of which we are not aware. For example, he discusses the noble innocent who develops a good character as a result of the naturally good temperament she did not choose, but who lacks

awareness of the goodness of the values that guide her (p. 104). But, he implausibly concludes that natural virtue could be as much a virtue as consciously habituated virtue. For the virtuous character that results from an active temperament will not be as stable as one that is the result of conscious choices since one's natural temperaments change over time.[49]

Still, while Trianosky claims that the active temperament discriminates amongst ends, he says the process of forming one's character may not be conscious or voluntary. But, this is problematic for a couple reasons. First, the process is at odds with calling one's subsequent character that of a noble innocent. For the exercise of agency in the choosing of ends and performing right actions is enough to call a person fully virtuous rather than having the natural virtue a noble innocent has even though she did not choose her naturally virtuous temperament. Second, it is hard to believe that an adult could be naturally generous and form a generous character through voluntarily choosing generous acts and being motivated by the right reasons without being aware so that she recognizes the goodness of generosity. Further, this criticism also applies to his view of passive temperaments. He claims that a person can develop a good character, even have the right motivations and make the right choices, but because his character development was facilitated by a passive temperament and good parents, he is not responsible for it. This conclusion overemphasizes the importance of the genesis of one's voluntary choices that are formative of one's character. For the adult who was fortunate to be brought up well still makes free choices that form her character and is thus responsible for forming it. In sum, the account of a character formed through both active and passive temperament that Trianosky describes is undistinguishable from a character formed through one's conscious will. Further, I

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[49] I discuss the moral implications that changes to one's natural temperament that occur in relation to age in chapter four. See also (McCrae *et al*, 2000) for discussion of the empirical evidence for temperamental changes according to age.

recognize cases of responsibility for character despite one's being affected by character luck that Trianosky rejects: a person who freely chooses actions formative of his character is responsible for it despite the significant role his passive temperament played in acquiring the ends at which his free choices aim.

4. Card on forward-looking responsibility for character. Card trades a "backward-looking" or "liability" sense of responsibility, where the focus is on assigning praise, blame, regret, punishment, or reward, with a "forward-looking" sense of responsibility, where we focusing on actively taking responsibility for our future actions and selves (Card, 1996, p. 25). Her main focus is on those who have experienced bad circumstantial luck that affects their character development, namely those who have grown up under oppressed circumstances and in turn may develop "survival skills" – vices needed to survive one's circumstances. She argues that taking responsibility involves developing an integrity of character rather than autonomy.

Card lists four senses of responsibility, the first three are forward-looking, the last is backward-looking:

(1) The administrative or managerial sense of responsibility – undertaking to size up and organize possibilities comprehensively, deciding which should be realized and how;
(2) The accountability sense of responsibility – agreeing to answer or account for something, or finding that one should be answerable, and then doing do;
(3) The care-taking sense of responsibility – committing oneself to stand behind something, to back it, support it, make it good (or make good on one's failure to do so), and following through;
(4) The credit sense of responsibility – owning up to having been the (morally) relevant cause of something's happening or not happening, taking the credit (or blame) for it. (1996, p.28)

All four types involve a "taking" of responsibility that Card sees as characteristic of being a responsible agent. A moral agent takes initiative to follow through on some task and puts herself in a position to be credited or blamed or to make up for the loss in some way if she fails.

Card's concern is with integrity – wholeness with respect to important values and commitments – not autonomy – independence from others (p. 32). Thus she views responsibility as primarily a matter of staying true to the values and commitments one has. Card's view, in its emphasis on developing integrity, does not directly address the relationship that responsibility may have to characters lacking integrity, characters had by ordinary people who do not consciously "take" responsibility in the forward-looking sense she develops.

V. The Need for an Account of Ordinary Character and Responsibility

I have presented four accounts of how one might respond to the problem of character luck and have raised objections to them all. In sum, Sher's account misses an important distinction between having a positive or negative quality of character and being responsible for developing that character. Moody-Adams fails to recognize genuine cases where a person's upbringing affects her moral awareness and her ability to understand some moral truths. Trianosky unsuccessfully tries to identify a fully virtuous character with natural virtue and gives an account of a character formed through an active temperament that is not obviously different from forming a character through one's will. Lastly, Card's account presents a way for those with ordinary characters to take responsibility in a forward-looking sense, but does not address responsibility assignments to those who do not make this commitment. If we instead focus on the type of character of the ordinary person, we can understand how a person can be held responsible despite her good or bad character luck. In developing this account of the character of the ordinary person, we can identify two sources of character luck: natural temperaments and one's upbringing. While one's natural temperament and the circumstances into which one is born are a matter of fortune, not luck, the way they interact can make one lucky or unlucky. The result is that we can be held responsible to the extent that we have the capacity to reform our characters,

i.e. make them better (i.e., virtuous) or more durable, and perform good actions. Still, our circumstances can impede the awareness needed to motivate or initiate that reform and thus can provide an excusing factor for a bad character.

In chapters three and four, I draw on the works of Aristotle to develop an account of the character of the ordinary person that helps us understand how responsibility can be assigned despite bad luck and fragmentary characters. Doing so allows us to construct an account of responsibility and character that can answer to contemporary issues of moral luck and the challenges posed by social psychologists that it is situations and not characters that determine behavior. In chapter six, I show how Aristotle's account is consistent with the current psychological literature on character. Specifically, the work of John Doris on local virtues and Christian Miller on global traits indicates that the ordinary person exhibits traits of character that are very narrow when it comes to objective features of a situation (Doris) or broad with respect to psychologically salient features (Miller). For example, a person might only help another in need when she is in a good mood. According to Doris, she has the narrow or local trait "helpful-when-in-a-good-mood" that is activated in a very narrow set of situations that call for helpful behavior. According to Miller, she has a global trait consisting of various dispositions that are relevant to helping behavior, one of which is "helpful-when-in-a-good-mood." This trait is activated across situations, but issues in variable behavior depending on how the person sees the situation, i.e., whether it is one that elicits fear, guilt, a good mood, etc. These views are consistent with Aristotle's claims in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* that a person's behavior is significantly influenced by her mood and that her character and behavior is vulnerable to circumstances. This means that the extent to which a person can form her character relies on the quality of the environment in which she develops and acts.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER, CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT,

AND RESPONSIBILITY IN

ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

The pervasiveness of moral luck, especially that of character luck, makes it difficult to

understand how we can appropriately hold others, and be held, responsible. If responsibility

requires some level of control and awareness, and the natural temperaments and social

inheritances that play a large role in the formation of our characters are far outside of our control

and often impede our awareness, basing an ethical theory on character seems hopeless. Further,

relying on a theory of character and responsibility that is inspired by Aristotle seems even more

doomed. For the traditional views attributed to him set standards of virtue and control that almost

no one reaches. Throughout this and the following chapters, I will show the extent to which

Aristotle's view in the *EN* sets an ideal that is difficult, but not impossible, to achieve given what

he states in the *EN* (this chapter), *Rhetoric* (chapter 4), and *Politics* (chapter 5) and what we

know based on recent empirical work (chapter 6).

In this chapter, I focus on setting forth a standard account of Aristotle's theory of moral

development and responsibility in his *EN*.[1] Since the account I construct in chapters four and five

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[1] Of course, in giving any account, one must make interpretive decisions that someone will undoubtedly disagree
with, but this is a problem for anyone trying to lay out Aristotle's moral theory. As much as I can, I rely on standard
interpretive moves or interpretations offered by scholars who do not present controversial interpretations. This is
because my aim is not to present a novel view of Aristotle's theory of responsibility in his *EN*. The novelty of my
interpretation of Aristotle's moral theory comes in chapters four and five.

from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Politics* is novel, I first must sketch the standard view. I will make

the connections later to what I do in chapters four and five and in chapter six when I respond to a

prominent objection made by situationists against Aristotle's moral theory.

I argue that while Aristotle's ethical view put forth in the *EN* surely does not suppose that

only what is under our direct control is susceptible to moral judgment or a constituent of

happiness (*eudaimonia*), he does strive to exclude, or at the very least greatly limit, factors that

lie outside of our control as grounds for praise or blame or living a happy life. So while he

acknowledges that a good life will require some external goods (like friendship, money, or a

good upbringing) (*EN*, I.10, 1101a14-16) which are caused by luck (I.8, 1099b7)[2] and that

happiness is vulnerable to great misfortunes (I.9, 1100a6), he rejects the common view that

eudaimonia is the result of fortune (I.9, 1099b18-19) and his account of responsibility instead

favors those things that are "up to us" (*eph'ēmin*) (III.5, 1113b14).[3] More specifically, in his

account of moral development and responsibility at *EN* II.1-3 and III.1-5, Aristotle gives an

account in which the early habituation process leads to the culmination of a state or *hexis*, from

which a person can go on to make free choices that solidify her[4] character, making it one that is

imbedded with her choices: a *hexis prohairetikē*. It is this type of character for which one is most

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[2] See also *Magna Moralia* (II.8, 1207b18-19) where Aristotle (or at least a view that can be plausibly assigned to him. Cf. (Bobonich, 2006, pp. 15-16) for some discussion on the authenticity of *Magna Moralia*) claims that good luck (*eutuchia*) is an auxiliary (*sunergos*) to happiness (*eudaimonia*). He also acknowledges good luck (*eutuchia*) as the cause of external goods in the *Rhetoric* (I.5, 1361b40-1362a11).

[3] See Nussbaum (2001) for a detailed analysis of the Ancient Greek understanding of moral luck. See Tess (1997) who analyzes the extent to which the *Nicomachean Ethics* excludes factors that are susceptible to luck (pp. 73-79).

[4] Although Aristotle envisions his account of virtue and virtuous character in the *EN* to apply only to Greek men, I use the general interpretative strategy of universalizing his claims and applying them to men and women alike. An indication of this is that I use either feminine or masculine pronouns when referring to the person undergoing habituation. I do recognize that there are criticisms of this approach to reading the history of philosophy, but I do not believe these criticisms apply as easily to Aristotle as they do to Kantian or utilitarian views since Aristotle's view does not exclude emotions. I do not address these worries in full here as they are far outside the scope of this project.

responsible. In brief, the standard account of responsibility for action in *EN* III.1-5 requires that

an action be voluntary (III.1, 1109b31) and performed by an agent capable of making choices in

order for one to be held responsible, that is, to be praised or blamed for performing it. As I will

show in more detail later, this account excludes the role of "lucky factors"[5] such as natural

differences, like age, that can influence behavior and instead emphasizes those things that are

"up to us." After presenting Aristotle's account of character and responsibility in the *EN*, I spend

chapters four and five developing his account of the character of the ordinary person in the

Rhetoric and *Politics*. Taking these three texts together gives us a fuller picture of character and

responsibility in Aristotle's ethics, one that is consistent with growing empirical data on

character.

Aristotle argues at *EN* III.5 that we are responsible for actions that stem from our

habituated states (*hexeis*) because we are responsible for forming those states (1114a4-5).[6] So, in

order to fully treat the account of responsibility for action that is presented in *EN* III.1-5, one

should begin by analyzing the formation of one's habituated states that occurs during one's

moral development described in *EN* II.1-3. For having a state (*hexis*) is required for

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[5] That is, factors we do not directly or indirectly control. An example of having indirect control is the control we exercise over our passions: we can order them by choosing actions that will result in habituated emotional responses. See Kosman (1999) for discussion of the problem of being held responsible for our emotions despite their not being "up to us." See Lewis (2012) who shows how Aristotle's theory of habituation is supported by recent work in psychology and neuroscience.

[6] Our responsibility for forming our states will need to be further qualified in what follows given how much these states are affected by factors outside of our control, such as upbringing. Aristotle does not think that we need to have been fully responsible for forming our character in order to be responsible for actions that follow from it. See Meyer (1993, ch. 5) for extended analysis of responsibility for character. See also Irwin (1980, pp. 138-141) for related discussion.

responsibility (1111b6),[7] and the acquisition of one's state occurs first.[8] In this chapter, I present

the standard account of moral development in *EN* II.1-3 and responsibility presented in *EN* III.1-

5. The aim is to present a full picture of the relationship between habituation, state (*hexis*), and

responsibility, as it is stated in the *EN*. In chapter four, I show how this model contrasts with the

one that emerges from the *Rhetoric*.

I. Habituation in *EN* II.1-3

Aristotle's moral theory stands out from other Kantian and Utilitarian theories in its

emphasis on moral development. Book II of the *EN* presents an outline of moral development

through his account of habituation where a person develops a certain quality of character that

corresponds to the kinds of actions she has habitually performed. So, habituating moral virtue

begins in childhood through the repetition of virtuous acts. For Aristotle claims that unlike sense

perception, which is first a developed capacity[9] and then an activity whenever an object of

perception is nearby, moral virtues begin in activity before becoming a disposition or state

(*hexis*) (*EN*, II.1, 1103a28-30). That is, by repeatedly performing just acts, one may eventually

become just.[10] The same will go for habituating vicious traits. And so, he claims,

> characteristics (*hexeis*) develop from corresponding activities (*energeiai*). For that
> reason, we must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind, since any variations in
> them will be reflected in our characteristics. Hence it is no small matter whether one habit

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[7] Choosing an act is required for full responsibility, that is, praise or blame for a virtue or vice (*EN*, II.4, 1105a32) and a state (*hexis*) is required for choice (*prohairesis*) (*EN*, VI.2, 1139a33), at least in the fullest sense of choice. See Sherman (1991) for discussion of *prohairesis* and the limited sense in which children make choices. I discuss her view in section one.

[8] For other views that acknowledge the importance of considering moral formation alongside Aristotle's view of responsibility in *EN* III, see Nussbaum (2001), Sherman (1991), and Burnyeat (1980). See also Nussbaum who argues that treating action as falling into only two types (voluntary actions of children or animals versus actions of adults capable of choice) makes the move from childhood to adult action mysterious (2001, p. 286).

[9] That is, we have the capacity to see at birth, without having to develop it.

[10] Granted her life is not impeded upon by a tragic amount of bad luck or fortune.

or another is inculcated in us from early childhood; on the contrary, it makes considerable difference, or, rather, all the difference (tr. Ostwald, II.1, 1103b21-25).

Even for the child, whose deliberative faculty is not yet fully developed (Politics, I.13, 1260a12-14), and thus who does not make choices, the sorts of actions he or she performs will be partially formative of his or her state (*hexis*).[11]

To better understand how the child develops into an adult, it is useful to distinguish between two major stages of moral development: the early habituation process and a later development where an adult capable of choice makes decisions that solidify her character.[12] Throughout the early habituation process, the child performs certain acts that partially form her state (*hexis*), as Aristotle states at the close of *EN* II.1. While some scholars hold that the moral development of a child deals strictly with the material aspects of character, *viz.* the nonrational parts of the soul such as the emotions and feelings of pleasure and pain,[13] other scholars have suggested that the moral development children undergo is not limited to the training of the appetite, but rather, involves cognitive training as well.[14] Contrary to those who think only the material constituents of character, such as her feelings, desires, or passions, is habituated in the child, Nancy Sherman gives a compelling argument to suggest this view is false. For it would indeed be mysterious that a child suddenly becomes an adult capable of full virtue if prior to adulthood she was only capable of feeling appropriately – moral perception, the proper seeing of one's circumstances calling for moral action, does not form immediately when one becomes an

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[11] For discussion on the account of the child in Aristotle's work, see Tress (1997).

[12] See Meyer (1993, ch. 5, esp. pp. 124-125), and Destrée (2011) for more discussion on this two-stage theory.

[13] See Irwin (1996) and Brickhouse (1991).

[14] See Sherman (1991) and Burnyeat (1980). I endorse this view in what follows. See Kerr (2011) for discussion on the mechanical and the cognitivist views of moral habituation in Aristotle.

adult. So, Sherman claims that during a child's training, he does not just perform certain actions, but also responds to situations and decides how to act (*Ibid*., p.175). At the first stage of moral development, then, the child is cognitively engaged and the level of cognitive engagement increases as a person's deliberative faculty develops. In other words, there is no mindless habituation, as some scholars have argued, but rather, moral development includes the development of a person's moral perception that will in turn aid in the development of her practical reasoning.

While many scholars agree that for Aristotle early habituation involves a cognitive element, they differ in their account of the ways in which the child's moral perception is engaged. Burnyeat argues that the cognitive engagement is in the child's grasping of the "that," which involves taking pleasure in the good and seeing virtue as intrinsically good (1980, pp. 76-78). Frede also acknowledges that it is through early habituation that we acquire the ethical "starting points" – the "thats" – but further claims that since character virtues involve being responsive to reason, they do not develop independently of it; through punishment, blame, praise, reward, and verbal instruction a child is mentally engaged (2013, pp. 23-27, 31). Kerr argues similarly that habituation involves grasping the "that," but claims also that habituation is the best suited for this task and that there is no additional "why" that gets added to one's ethical knowledge. The "that" refers to the first principles of ethics and so do not need further demonstration. It is knowledge of the intrinsic goodness of virtue (2011, pp. 650-653). Kristjánsson argues that the development of *phronēsis* is in a large part externally motivated, but it also involves other factors like the natural affection a child has for his parents, mingling with the right people, listening to the right kind of music, and training one's perceptual faculties

similar to the development of skills,[15] all of which contribute an internal element (2006b, p. 113).

Sherman focuses on other elements of critical engagement besides the "that." She claims the

child is cognitively engaged through the gradual refinement of his ability to perceive moral

situations and the actions for which they call. She emphasizes Aristotle's view that the emotions

are not just irrational responses to one's environment, but sources of motivation and evaluation

(1989, pp. 169).

I do not intend here to contribute my own account of exactly how the early habituation

process involves the training of a child's cognitive faculty, though I rely heavily on Nancy

Sherman's account in my exposition of the early habituation process. I assume that there is more

than the brute training of a child's appetite during early habituation and that this partially

explains her ability to fully develop and exercise reason as an adult. If it turns out that a child's

cognitive engagement occurs in one way rather than another, or in a mix of some or all of the

ways suggested above, nothing in my argument will be affected. Instead, I will focus on the

transition from the first to the second stage of moral development, which can be tracked by

considering the difference between the full choices that adults make and the limited way in

which children make choices, which contribute to the development of their moral perception.

Nancy Sherman argues that though their deliberative processes are not yet sophisticated –

children do not take into account very many factors or their final ends – children deliberate

nonetheless (Sherman, 1991, p.175). She claims that throughout the habituation process, the

child is capable of simple means-ends deliberation, but not yet of full choice (*prohairesis*) (*Ibid*.,

p. 174). This means that the child, though without choice in the fullest sense, can still make

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[15] See Kristjánsson (2014a) and Annas (2011) for more on virtue as analogous to skill.

simple choices resulting from their instrumental reasoning. Although the distinction between

simple and complex choices is not explicitly made in Aristotle, Sherman argues that this

interpretation is not ruled out by what he does claim about the choices of adults (Sherman 1991,

p. 164).[16] Sherman's claim is further supported by what Aristotle says about the choices that

young people make in the *Rhetoric* (II.12, 1389a35). There, he uses the verb *hairountai*, rather

than the verb *prohaireisthai*, to describe young people's choices. The latter verb, *prohaireisthai*,

reflects his use of *prohairesis* to refer to the choices adults make as a result of their sophisticated

deliberations.[17]

Sherman argues that through the child's simple choices, she acquires some things that

partially constitute virtue, namely, the seeing of circumstances and feeling the proper emotional

responses (*Ibid*., p.189). Sherman supports this claim from a comparison of virtue to craft at

Metaphysics IX.8. There, Aristotle claims that the moral trainee shares in virtue just as the craft-

learner shares in the knowledge of the teacher as he produces a craft. Aristotle claims:

> But since, of that which in general is changing, some part must have changed (this will be
> clear in the case of change) so, equally, the one who is learning must, it would seem,
> possess some part of the knowledge he is learning (tr. Sherman, *Metaphysics*, 1049b28-
> 1050a2).

Aristotle claims that the learner of a craft must have some part of the knowledge he is learning.

Similarly, the child who is learning to be fully virtuous will contain some knowledge of it,

acquired during the early habituation process as she learns how to see situations as calling for

virtuous action. In other words, before she has practical wisdom, she will have some pieces

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[16] In Terence Irwin's article, a similar distinction is made between a simple and complex theory of responsibility. Children can meet the simple theory's conditions since they act voluntarily (Irwin, 1980, p. 124). The complex theory is then reserved for adults (Irwin, 1980, p. 141).

[17] More on deliberation and choice in section II.

needed for practical wisdom, such as having the right values or ends. This claim is not found at

EN II.4, according to Sherman, because there Aristotle is concerned with what it takes to call one

virtuous, rather than to habituate virtue (1991, pp. 187-188).

Throughout the process of responding to situations and making simple choices, the

child's moral perception develops. Since virtuous actions are not going to be identical – they are

context-specific and thus will appear differently in different situations – the child cannot simply

be doing the same thing over and over. The child must be able to see how a situation calls for

courage, even if her distinctions are not fine enough to always read the situation correctly and

she is not developed enough to balance competing values.

The result of the early habituation process is the development of a habituated state (*hexis*)

that requires the maturation of internal faculties occurring while one is interacting with one's

environment. As a child begins to pick out salient features of circumstances that call for action,

she gains experience (*empeiria*), which Aristotle defines as arising from the memories of several

perceived instances of a particular type (*Metaphysics*, I; *Posterior Analytics*, II.19). Over time,

experience helps make finer distinctions to better apply virtues (see for instance: *EN*, III.8,

1116b6-7; VI.8, 1142a13-19; VI.11, 1143b13-14).

As the child reaches the second stage of moral development, she has slowly acquired

finer perceptive skills, the appropriate emotional responses, and has developed her feelings of

pleasure to correspond to the appropriate objects. She has a state (*hexis*) that expresses some

conception of the good she has acquired through her childhood development. But, these results

are not sufficient for a fully formed state (*hexis prohairetikē*). Instead, it is the judging and

choosing of actions aimed at one's final end that fully forms one's state, and this occurs after

childhood. So when Aristotle claims that one is responsible for one's habituated state (*hexis*)

because at the beginning (*archē*), one could have done otherwise (*EN*, III.5, 1114a4-5),

Brickhouse argues rightly that the beginning (*archē*) refers to a time when we are in control of

our states (*EN,* III.5,1114b30-1115a2). If this is so, Aristotle could not be referring to children,

who do not exercise such control (Brickhouse, 1991, p. 143). Instead, Aristotle refers to the point

of time when a child has finished the first stage of early habituation and is in a position to fully

form her state so that it expresses her choices. Aristotle must think that after childhood and

before one's state (*hexis*) is fully formed – that is, before it is a *hexis prohairetikē* – a person

exercises control over acquiring a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*). Thus, Aristotle

claims we are co-responsible (*sunaitioi*) (III.5, 1114b23) or responsible in "some way" (*pōs*

aitios) (III.5, 1114b3) for becoming virtuous or vicious; our upbringing brings us much of the

way as we begin to form states (*hexeis*) of character that reflect some conception of the good, but

at the second stage of moral habituation, once we reach a point where we are capable of making

choices, we are in greater control. This point is further supported by Aristotle's claims at *EN* X.9,

where he states,

> Presumably, however, it is not enough if they get the correct upbringing and attention;
> rather, they must continue the same practices and be habituated to them when they
> become men… As we have said, then, someone who is good must be finely brought up
> and habituated, and then must live in decent practices, doing base actions neither
> willingly nor unwillingly (tr. Irwin, 1180a1-3, 15-17).

Thus, it is not enough to have properly habituated the right feelings or to have begun developing

one's perceptive skills, but one must continue to perform good actions when one becomes an

adult capable of making choices in order to form a character in the fullest sense, that is, a state

imbedded with one's choices, or a *hexis prohairetikē*. Once the child develops her perceptive

skills, emotions, and feelings of pleasure and pain, she will become capable of making the sort of

choices that stem from a habituated state (*hexis*). In other words, these choices are *prohairetic*,

rather than the simple choices that children make, because they are more complex in their aiming at a conception of the good. Brickhouse argues that these choices are of the kind for which one is held responsible (1991, p. 147).

In sum, as a child enters adulthood, she has not yet fully formed his character (*hexis*) into a virtuous or vicious one, but she has developed dispositions (*hexeis*) to feel appropriately; correct education (*orthē paideia*) is, after all, concerned with finding pleasure or pain in the right things (II.3, 1104b13). Though her cognitive faculties have been engaged, they will not be fully developed until adulthood, and so she is neither virtuous nor vicious, but still has a state (*hexis*) from which she is capable of making choices. Only when she becomes an adult can she make choices because it is only then that she will have a state (*hexis*) formed through her upbringing that sets the end for deliberations, and her reason will be fully developed, making thought (*dianoia*) possible.[18] For Aristotle states that choice (*prohairesis*) "requires understanding (*nous*) and thought (*dianoia*), and also a state of character (*hexis*)" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, VI.2, 1139a33). When a child reaches this stage of development, her choices will form her character (*hexis*) into a good or bad one, and her state will become a *hexis prohairetikē*, having been formed by her choices.[19]

If an adult becomes fully virtuous, she will not only have habituated the appropriate feelings and desires from childhood or made several good choices, but she will have acquired practical wisdom (*phronēsis*): the virtue of the calculative part of the rational part of the soul

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[18] See Blundell (1992) who discusses the relationship between *dianoia* and *ēthos*.

[19] See Lawrence (2011) who distinguishes four types of character that arise through the stages of moral development: natural character, habit or proto-character, experiential or proper character, and full character. For the most part, these distinctions correspond to what I've said here. The child is born with certain natural inclinations and has a natural character. After receiving moral education, she has a proto-character (*hexis*) ready to be formed into a full character, or a *hexis prohairetikē*. I do not mark a difference between what Lawrence calls an experiential character and full character, though it's possible there is such a distinction to be made in one's moral development. Whether or not there is such an "almost virtue" stage does not affect what I say in this chapter.

(VI.1, 1139a4-15). Aristotle defines practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as "a state (*hexis*) grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being" (tr. Irwin, VI.5, 1140b5-6). The involvement of reason in a virtuous person's grasping of the truth about what is good or bad for a human means that he can deliberate well, that is, deliberate free from error and about the right goals (VI.9, 1142b24-25), which makes practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) distinct from cleverness. Unlike practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), cleverness is the capacity that allows one to reason effectively about any end for which one wishes: good or bad (VI.12, 1144a25-26). The practically wise person (*phronimos*) instead has the right goal on account of his moral virtue (VI.12, 1144a7) and is called clever only because he is good at achieving this goal (VI.12, 1144a28). Along with good deliberation, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) also involves perception of what is good: either in terms of determining the mean (II.6, 1103b31-34; III.5 1114b29, VI.1, 1138b20) or what action is the right one (II.9, 1109b20; IV.5, 1126b2). The exercise of intelligence (*nous*) enables the practically wise person (*phronimos*) to grasp the ultimate particular, that is, the contingent fact that will serve as the minor premise of the practical syllogism, which I discuss in section II (VI.11, 1143b3-4). In sum, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is necessary for full moral virtue, which can be acquired once an adult's rational capacity is fully developed and she is able to deliberate and has the experience to help make finer distinctions about what situations call for moral action.

A further puzzle remains, one that gets dubbed "the paradox of moral education."[20] The problem cast in Aristotelian terminology is how we can acquire practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) if all we have had was externally guided habituation. Even though a child is cognitively engaged

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[20] (Kristjánsson, 2006b, p.102). The term is originally coined by R.S. Peters (1981, ch 3).

throughout the habituation process, his cognitive development is monitored and urged in certain directions by his moral educator. Thus, he develops a desire for certain things – those things he is exposed to first, as Aristotle puts it – that are controlled by those adults with whom he is in contact. This also poses a problem for responsibility for character since the ends that guide the voluntary actions that solidify our character are set by those who have trained us.[21] We shall deal with problems concerning responsibility in chapters four and five. For now, we limit ourselves to asking how an externally motivated moral perception can develop into a self-guided, autonomous practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

Kristján Kristjánsson argues that we (philosophers) do not know. But, this is not a fault with our theory. Our ignorance is not due to some lack on our part, but because the answer to this question is not within our domain. While we might recognize *that* good early habituation is needed for developing practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), we cannot determine *how* humans are the kind of animals whose development works this way without much empirical work in moral psychology (2006b, p. 114). This point is not at all in conflict with Aristotle's general disposition towards empirical study. He, for example, states that in order to understand how one moves from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge, we need to consult the natural scientists (*physiologoi*) (*EN*, VII.3, 1147b7-9).[22] So while we can recognize that our moral perception and knowledge is significantly impacted by our upbringings, if we are to understand the step between this early stage and the later stage where practical wisdom is fully developed and autonomous,

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[21] Aristotle raises a similar objection at *EN* III.5: "But someone may say that everyone aims at the apparent good, and does not control how it appears, but, on the contrary, his character controls how the end appears to him" (1114b1-4). See Meyer (1993, ch. 5) for insightful analysis of *EN* III.5.

[22] The *physiologoi* to which Aristotle refers can mean those who do natural philosophy, such as the Pre-Socratics or medical doctors. In this passage, Aristotle is likely referring to the latter – those who study the human body.

we may need to consult (or do) the empirical work on this matter. How this work turns out, however, does not change what I say here about the role the early habituation process plays in her development.

Still, Sherman has done much work on Aristotle on the habituation of reason that suggests ways in which externally guided reason can develop into autonomous reason. Drawing from Aristotle's work on the emotions in the *Rhetoric*, which contain cognitive elements such as images and beliefs, Sherman argues that the development of the emotions of a child engages her cognitive faculties. A child learns to see her environment and make finer distinctions as her parents describe and explain what actions she should perform and why (1991, p. 171-174). As the child develops and continues to mimic virtuous actions, she makes further distinctions, eventually acquiring the experience needed for knowledge (*Ibid*., pp.190-199). So while much of the child's development is externally guided, the child contributes internal elements such as her emotions, which contain a cognitive dimension. Kristjánsson recognizes this point as well, though he argues that a physical explanation provided by natural scientists will contribute to this explanation (2006b, p. 113). Burnyeat argues that the acquisition of moral virtue from early habituation is a less than rational process, but necessary for one to truly understand why virtue is good (1980, pp. 80-81).[23] Taking into account these considerations gives us some direction in understanding how the early habituation process leads to fully autonomous practical wisdom, even if we must turn to the sciences for physical explanations of this movement.

In my exposition of the process of moral development, I have presented a view that has taken Sherman's account of the moral development of children to explain the process of early

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[23] See Kerr (2011) who argues that habituation is the method most suitable to acquiring the starting points of ethical life.

habituation: a child makes limited choices and develops through the repetition of acts that contribute to the development of her moral perception. While I have focused on the development of moral perception in Sherman, I also indicate that the child's feelings will develop throughout the habituation process so that she learns to take pleasure in the right things. This is in line with Burnyeat's view that moral education involves learning to find good things pleasant. In addition to the insights I have gathered from Sherman and Burnyeat, I argue for a second-stage of moral development, where a person can solidify her state (*hexis*) into one that is imbedded with her choices, *viz.* a *hexis prohairetikē*. Once a child has reached adulthood, her rational faculty is fully developed and she becomes capable of making choices in the fullest sense, that is, choices that result from a more sophisticated process of deliberation. The state (*hexis*) that results from early habituation sets ends that an adult pursues through deliberation. In section two, I say more about the kind of deliberative processes an adult undergoes when I discuss Aristotle's theory of responsibility at *EN* III.1-5. In sum, the sort of responsibility one has for one's actions as an adult requires first that one has a habituated state, or *hexis*. Once one's state is formed, one may be held responsible for actions that are voluntary since she is capable of choice, which are the conditions emphasized in *EN* III.1-5.

II. *EN* III.1-5's Conditions for Responsibility

Aristotle's account of moral responsibility requires that the action for which one is held responsible is both voluntary (III.1, 1109b31) and involves choice (III.2, 1111b6). So, this section examines the conditions Aristotle claims must be met for something to be either voluntary or chosen. The result is an account that emphasizes what is "up to us" (III.5, 1113b14), that is, one that primarily assigns responsibility for what we can control over what merely happens to us or what we unreflectively acquire as part of who we are. For Aristotle claims that

we "seek something more" than what comes naturally (VI.13, 1144b7). The sort of state (*hexis*

prohairetikē) that is subject to praise or blame on this view is one that issues in actions that are

(1) voluntary and (2) either a) chosen or b) performed by adults capable of choice.

At *EN* III.1, Aristotle defines the voluntary (*hekousia*) as "one in which the initiative

(*archē*) lies with the agent who knows (*eidoti*) the particular circumstances in which the action is

performed" (tr. Ostwald, III.1, 1111a21-23). Here, he states that the two criteria for the voluntary

are: (1) the agent's having initiated the action[24], and (2) the agent's knowing what she is doing

where "knowing" (*eidoti*) is understood broadly to include the awareness with which even an

animal operates. These two conditions are broad as Aristotle thinks that not only adults are

capable of voluntary movement, but so do children and animals (III.1, 1111a23). What makes an

agent the beginning (*archē*) of what is voluntary can include one or more of the following:

desire, belief, or choice. Desires, Aristotle claims, are either rational or irrational (*Rhetoric*, I.11,

1370a18-27). I will discuss rational desires shortly as they refer to an agent's choices. Irrational

desires are natural desires of the body, e.g. hunger, thirst, or sex. Aristotle claims they do not

arise from any opinion of the mind. So, these are desires even animal and children have. They

explain the behaviors of both animals and children, who do not act according to Aristotle (*EN*,

VI.2, 1139a21).

Belief and choice, by contrast, are elements that are proper to the adult who can engage in

reasoning. For Aristotle, these internal elements are what best explain an action as voluntary for

an adult since they refer back to the motivations of the agent. In other words, they reveal her

character (*hexis*).[25] For example, what explains my voluntarily typing this chapter is not that the

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[24] Here I focus on action, though the voluntary (*hekousia*) is broader than action. A state of character, for example, could be acquired voluntarily.

muscles in my fingers are contracting in certain ways that allow them to strike the various plastic keys on my keyboard. A better explanation, according to Aristotle, refers to my desire to complete the third chapter of my dissertation, my belief that typing these words attain or help attain these goals, and my choice to engage in this activity. My desire, belief, and choice partially constitute the voluntariness of my action.

But these alone are not sufficient. For Aristotle also claims that knowledge of the particulars is also necessary. For animals and children, knowing what they are doing involves a basic awareness of their behavior. A lion, for example, desires to eat and engages in behavior that will result in his eating. In some sense, the lion knows what he is doing even though he lacks conceptual awareness of the act. For adult humans, by contrast, knowing what they are doing involves cognitive effort whereby they can grasp the particulars of an act. The sorts of particulars Aristotle has in mind are the following:

> who is doing it; what he is doing; about what or to what he is doing it; sometimes also what he is doing it with –with what instrument, for example; for what result, for example, safety; in what way, for example, gently or hard (tr. Irwin, III.1, 1111a4-7).

Unlike an animal or a child, the adult has conceptual awareness of the particulars of the act and can distinguish between more complicated descriptions of the same act.

Aristotle claims it is unlikely a person would be ignorant of all of the particulars he lists, but she is said to act involuntarily if she is ignorant of any one of these, especially if the

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[25] Contemporary social psychologist will often reject these kinds of folk explanations that refer to various psychological aspects of a person in order to determine her motivations. Given that people's behavior is so often caused by minor situational factors, of which people tend to be unaware, some social psychologists prescribe to situationist thinking where behavior is believed to be primarily determined by the kind of situation a person is in rather than an abiding character or a person's motivations. While I acknowledge that this is true for the ordinary person, and I speak more to the kind of character that is fragmented and highly sensitive to situations in the second part of in chapters four and five, here I stick to the views put forth in the *EN*, where Aristotle is concerned with character in the fullest sense – character that will, among other things, be a better way to explain one's behavior than reference to her circumstances.

ignorance is of the particular that most defines the action (III.1, 1111a8, a17-18). For example, if I think I am typing this chapter, but I am actually inadvertently sending a code to some hacker who can and will use it to rob a bank, I can be said to write a chapter voluntarily, but not to have aided in a robbery voluntarily. Similarly, at *EN* V.8, Aristotle distinguishes between, for example, knowing that a victim is a human and knowing that he is one's father. This means that the same action can be both voluntary and involuntary under different descriptions: the act of killing a human was done voluntarily because it was chosen in knowledge, but the act of killing one's own father was not because that was not done in knowledge (V.8, 1135b4-6). Irwin expresses this criterion for voluntary action when he claims that not only must one *believe* her action x is F, but her action x must actually *be* F (1980, p. 124). Requiring that one knows the particulars of the action involves distinguishing between the intention of the agent and the action; what the agent intends to do is not always the same as what she actually does. When an act is caused by ignorance,[26] the initiative does not lie in the agent since the act is not explained by the agent's beliefs, desires, and choice. Further, Aristotle claims that the agent who acted because of ignorance will feel regret (III.1, 1110b18-19). In short, the absence of belief, desire, or choice and the presence of regret are psychological indicators that an act was caused by ignorance.

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[26] Aristotle also distinguishes between acts caused *by* ignorance and those done *in* ignorance (*EN*, III.1, 1110b25). An act is caused *by* ignorance in the way we have been discussing: one does not know one or more of the particulars constituting the situation. By contrast, an act is done *in* ignorance if, for example, one is drunk and acts in ignorance of what she is doing. Her act is ultimately caused by her drunkenness, rather than ignorance. One can be held responsible for doing an act *in* ignorance, according to Aristotle, because she is responsible for the origin of that ignorance, i.e. she chose to get drunk (III.1, 1110b30). For example, I may become verbally aggressive when I drink, causing me to say hurtful things I would otherwise never say to a family member. While drunk, I behave in ignorance of the fact that what I say is hurtful, but since I chose to drink in the first place, my act is not excusable due to my ignorance. If, by contrast, I am playfully teasing my sibling about something that seems harmless and innocent, like his new shirt, but I wind up hurting his feelings, not knowing that he is actually very self-conscious about how this shirt looks on him, my action would be caused by ignorance and not totally voluntary. While I voluntarily engaged in teasing my brother, I did not voluntarily hurt his feelings.

In sum, the first condition for responsibility is voluntariness, which requires an internal principle of change for the action (i.e., the action is caused, or explained, by an agent's desire, belief, or choice) and knowledge of the particulars constituting the action. Though voluntariness is necessary for responsibility, it cannot be sufficient since children and animals are capable of voluntary action, but are not properly praised or blamed (III.2, 1111b6).[27] The internal principle required for voluntary action is satisfied by appetite for children and animals (III.1, 1111a25-27), but, unlike children and animals, adults can also act on their choices (III.2, 1111b8).[28] So, a person must also have chosen the act to be held responsible for it. For virtue and vice require action (I.7, 1098a15) and action requires choice (VI.2, 1139a21).

The second condition for responsibility, then, is choice. As the result of deliberation of which children (and animals) are not capable, choice in its fullest sense (*prohairesis*) is reserved for adults. Aristotle says of choice,

> what is decided is what has been previously deliberated. For [choice] involves reason and thought… [what is decided, *prohaireton*] is chosen [*haireton*] before [*pro*] other things (tr. Irwin, III.2, 1112a16-18).[29]

For Aristotle, choice is the result of deliberation, a choosing of something before others. Because of this, Aristotle gives an account of deliberation that emphasizes what is up to us (*eph'ēmin*) and human agency (*praxis*) (III.3, 1112a31). For, he claims, no one deliberates about what is

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[27] That is, virtue and vice, the proper objects of praise and blame, require more than one's passions being in a good state; they require choice (VI.2, 1139a35) and right reason (VI.13, 1145a5), both of which children are incapable.

[28] In fact, later Aristotle denies that animals act at all. For he claims that there are three capacities of the soul that control action and truth: sense perception, understanding, and desire (VI.2, 1139a18-19). And of these three, he eliminates sense perception as a principle of action since this is shared with animals, who do not act (VI.2, 1139a21).

[29] Irwin translates *prohairesis* as "decision" rather than "choice" because he claims it better captures the thought that it is the result of deliberation. "Choice," he thinks, is too weak; it could be used to express mere preference, but this is not the full sense of the word as it is utilized in *EN* III.2. Thus, this passage is translated as "what is decided," and could also be translated as "what is chosen," as long as the meaning is clear that it is more than mere preference.

caused by nature, necessity, or chance (III.3, 1112a23-30). Instead, an agent deliberates about what he should do, thinking through what critics call the practical syllogism. The practical syllogism consists of a major premise expressing a desire for some good and a minor premise that expresses a belief about how to achieve that good that is in the agent's power (Cf. VII.3, 1147a1-9). Unless something intervenes, the major and minor premises will lead to action (*MA*, 700b19-701a25). For example, I might desire to be courageous and subsequently act courageously when the situation calls for it. The major premise would be something like "Courage is good," while the minor premise involves some perception of the particulars of a situation that will tell a person how to act courageously, e.g., "The courageous person would fire his weapon." These two premises lead to the conclusion: a choice to fire one's weapon. Unless something intervenes such as luck or a competing desire (such as what happens when one acts incontinently), the choice will lead to the firing of the weapon.

The major or universal premise of the practical syllogism sets some end for the chain of reasoning to promote. While Aristotle claims at III.3 that deliberation concerns not ends (*to telos*), but what promotes ends (*ta pros ta telē*) (1112b33-35), he does not mean that the deliberative process an adult undergoes is merely instrumental reasoning. Rather, deliberation can also be constitutive of our ends, as he elucidates outside of book III.[30] For instance, one of his criterion for a person to truly act virtuously is that she chooses the act for its own sake rather than for the sake of some other end (II.4, 1105a33). Further, he emphasizes in book VI that the kind of deliberation that is a part of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) – i.e., correct deliberation concerning the good of the human life (VI.5, 1140b6) – issues in actions that are ends in

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[30] For more discussion on the seeming conflict between the instrumental deliberation described at III.3 and that which is constitutive of ends in book VI, see Sorabji (1980) or Wiggins (1980).

themselves rather than productive of other ends (VI.2, 1139b4; VI.5, 1140b7; VI.12, 1144a1). In

other words, the good activity of practical reasoning partially constitutes the end for a human

being, whether or not it is productive of some further end.

Good deliberation concerning the good for a human is not only an activity constitutive of

a human's final end, *viz.*, *eudaimonia* or happiness, but it is also formative of one's desires. For

Aristotle claims that what we deliberate about is what we choose to do, which is what we also

desire to do once we have decided upon it. So, Aristotle calls choice a "deliberative desire"

(*bouleutikē orexis*) (III.3, 1113a12): after deliberating about what actions are the right ones to

take, we decide on a course of actions that we can do and desire them insofar as they bring about

our end. This process is one of which only adults are capable because it involves an eye towards

one's final end that takes into consideration many factors, such as different values (VI.5,

1140a28). Although children may be capable of instrumental reasoning and making choices in a

limited sense, only adults whose rational faculty has been fully developed can engage in the

deliberative process within the context of the "bigger picture" of life. Children makes choices,

but unlike adults, they neither consider how one action will promote a certain end far off into the

future, nor how that action will fit in with other values and other ends. In other words, an adult

has considered the alternatives when making her choice and has thought about how to balance

the values at stake whereas a child has not. For example, contemplation may be valued, and one

may deliberate about the best means to securing time to contemplate, but this does not mean that

one will maximize time for contemplation at the expense of all else, such as being a good friend

or relative.[31] One will instead consider how to balance the value of contemplation alongside

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[31] A similar argument is given as an objection to the exclusivist, or intellectualist, position that holds that Aristotle's
conclusion to the function argument at I.7 means that contemplation is the highest good for a human, excluding all
other goods such as virtue: "And so the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and

other values. In sum, deliberation concerns things that are within our control and promotes ends for which one wishes. The result of deliberation is choice, where an adult chooses something over the alternatives.[32]

Although choice is an important condition for a person's being held responsible, it is an unreasonably high standard to hold that a person must have chosen each particular action for which she is held responsible. Further, an incontinent person could not be held responsible for actions that run contrary to her reasoned choice, and Aristotle clearly thinks incontinence is a state (*hexis*) for which one should be held responsible (VII.4, 1148a3). Certainly, a person should be blamed or punished for reflectively choosing to act badly. But, a person might still voluntarily do some wrong and be held responsible for it, even if she did not actively engage in the deliberative process or even if her desire to act overrode or bypassed her deliberative process, as it does in the case of the incontinent person. For Aristotle claims that an adult can still be praised or blamed for an action as long as the action is voluntary (V.8, 1135a19-23). So, while voluntary action is not sufficient for responsibility, adding choice needs to be further qualified. For it is not the actual exercising of choice that makes a person responsible, but her capacity for choice,

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indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, I.7, 1098a11-19). The objection goes, if Aristotle does mean to exclude moral virtue as constituting one's final end, *viz. eudaimonia*, then he would agree that doing whatever one can to maximize contemplation, even morally wrong actions, would be permissible, even laudatory. But, this is obviously not a consequence Aristotle would accept and thus happiness (*eudaimonia*) must also be partially constituted by moral virtue (which is the inclusivist position). For readings on the inclusivist view see Annas (1999), Irwin (1991), and Ackrill (1980). For readings on the exclusivist, or intellectualist, view see Kraut (1989), Cooper (1975), and Nagel (1972). For a middle-ground view, see Lear (2004).

[32] Deliberation and choice do not only guide a person's actions, but they are also formative of one's desires. Although on first glance it seems that desires are not "up to us" and so it would not be reasonable to hold someone accountable for them, the responsibility assigned to one for her desires can now be explained. It is because our choices form our desires that we may be held derivatively responsible for them. See Kosman (1999) for further discussion of the indirect control we exercise over our passions.

which is only there if she is an adult whose rational faculty has been developed and who has

formed a settled state (*hexis*) so that she is capable of deliberation.[33]

III. Conclusion

Thus in Aristotle's account of moral development and responsibility put forth in the *EN*,

moral development is a sort of training of the appetite that does not necessarily exclude cognitive

elements such as: (1) perceptive skills required for picking out salient features of one's

circumstances or (2) choices made in limited means-ends deliberations. This account of moral

development in Aristotle is in agreement with Sherman's view of habituation. What I have also

put forth in this chapter is the relationship between this account and the second stage of moral

development: the outcome of early moral development is a child ready to form a character in the

fullest sense (i.e., a *hexis prohairetikē*), and become an agent who: (1) has the capacity to

deliberate and make sophisticated choices (*prohaireseis*) that promote ends, while aiming at

one's final end, and (2) performs voluntary actions that express her choices, desires, and beliefs.

On this view, full responsibility is assigned exclusively to adults by virtue of their fully-formed

characters (*hexeis prohairetikē*), but adults who have the capacity for choice, i.e., who have a

developed state (*hexis*) can also be held responsible for what is voluntary, even before they have

fully formed their characters (*hexeis*) into a *hexis prohairetikē*. And so along with an account of

early and later habituation, I have also shown how Aristotle's account of responsibility in the *EN*

relates to character (*hexis*); one needs a *hexis* in order to be held responsible for her voluntary

actions because a *hexis* makes one capable of choice in the fullest sense, i.e., where one can

choose from alternatives with an eye to one's final end. While Sherman and Burnyeat do not

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[33] This qualification is reflected in Irwin's final definition of responsibility (1980, p. 132).

develop full accounts of responsibility in relation to habituation, Brickhouse has argued that we are in full control at the second stage of habituation. My view differs insofar as I claim, in agreement with Meyer, that we are not in full control of the quality of our characters (*hexeis*), but co-responsible for them since our upbringing has a significant effect on their development, as Aristotle discusses at *EN* III.5.

Aristotle's view in the *EN* sets a high standard for full responsibility insofar as it requires control (voluntariness) and awareness (knowledge of all or at least the most important particulars, such as the nature or the results of an action). But, I will show in chapters four and five that Aristotle's relaxed view of responsibility takes into account contingent factors such as age or a bad upbringing over which we do not exercise a high degree of control and which can affect our moral knowledge. As I have argued in chapter two, the standards of control and awareness should not be too high; given the empirical evidence that suggests limits to both of these, we should have a more reasonable standard. Otherwise, most people could not reasonably be held responsible for many of their actions or their characters. If we consider Aristotle's account of moral development and responsibility in the *EN* as one that assumes a person has been met with good moral fortune in her genetic and social inheritances, we can still account for the development and character of the ordinary person – one who hasn't be as fortunate – and show how contingent factors affect one's being rightly held responsible. The theoretical account of virtue, habituation, character and *hexis* is still important in determining responsibility, but another element arises from what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*: one's capacity for developing virtue and performing virtuous actions is also important to consider. In chapters four and five, I develop this account of responsibility by focusing on the ordinary person and showing

how a relaxed account of responsibility corresponds to it. I further show that the standard for

judging a person as fully virtuous is not so high so as to be unreasonable and impossible to reach.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENETIC INHERITANCES AND NATURAL TEMPERAMENTS:

CHARACTER, CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT,

AND RESPONSIBILITY IN ARISTOTLE'S *RHETORIC*

Aristotle's account of character and responsibility in the *EN* certainly presents a high

standard for the individual insofar as it assumes that she has been met with a great deal of good

character luck. Because of this, virtue is indeed a rare achievement. While it still presents a

standard by which we may judge our own failings, it does not on its own provide enough to

judge whether we are responsible for our characters. For it is important to make a distinction

between having a virtuous character and being responsible for it. I shall argue that considering

Aristotle's views of the ordinary person in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* helps us make such a

distinction by considering how one's capacity to develop virtue affects how responsible she is for

her character and what follows from it.

In this chapter, I begin to develop a less stringent account of character and responsibility

in Aristotle, focusing on what he says in the *Rhetoric* about the ordinary citizen. I argue that

while his *EN* presents a narrow view of character and responsibility that emphasizes what is "up

to us," the *Rhetoric* broadens this view with an account of the character of the ordinary person

and how she may still be held responsible for her character. In other words, while the *EN*

assumes one has been met with

good character luck and therefore has a great capacity for becoming virtuous, the *Rhetoric* (and, as I show in chapter five, the *Politics*) provides more material on the ordinary person that reveals the various ways one's capacity for virtue is impinged upon. Thus, the *Rhetoric* (and *Politics*) further elaborates the need to consider not only how close or far one is from virtue, but whether her capacity for virtue has been limited by her nature or circumstances. Doing this allows us to address the problem of character luck within Aristotle's ethics. Specifically, this chapter addresses the type of character luck that has to do with our genetic inheritances or natural temperaments – either those with which we are born or those we naturally develop on account of physical changes that come with age rather than conscious choice. In chapter five, I focus on social inheritances – those having to do with the kind of government and circumstances in which we develop morally. There I focus on Aristotle's *Politics*. In chapter six of this dissertation, I also show how this account is consistent with the current empirical research on character. This is important to establishing the viability of an Aristotelian framework which has recently been rejected by moral philosophers who think that moral development of character is a hopeless endeavor.

I. Responsibility in the *EN* and Ideal Candidates for Virtue

Whereas the account of responsibility at *EN* II.1-3 and III.1-5 suggests that one is only held responsible for voluntary actions issuing from a fully habituated state (viz., a *hexis prohairetikē*), I focus on three commonly neglected chapters in the *Rhetoric*[1] and show how they

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[1] Aside from Garver (1994), whom I address in section III, the few scholars who have mentioned the passages in *Rhetoric* II.12-14 have failed to note their significance for an account of responsibility. Nussbaum only uses these chapters show that even those with a virtuous state will find virtue hard to retain; as they enter into old age, bad experiences pile up, and it gets more difficult to trust others and the world, which is required for many virtues (2001, pp. 338-339). At most, Nussbaum mentions in passing that these temperaments are those of ordinary people, not the virtuous (though she acknowledges that what is said applies also to the virtuous), but she does not elaborate what how it fits into an account of responsibility. Sherman concludes from these chapters that the emotional vulnerability of children described in II.12 may in some instances make them more responsive to concerns than adults, who are

suggest a broader account of responsibility. Because the audience in mind for the *EN* consists of young free Greek male citizens, Aristotle's account does not have much need for discussion about the natural dispositions that accompany the various ages of moral agents.[2] The account there assumes one has already been lucky with respect to one's genetic and social inheritances and natural temperaments: one is a free, Greek male citizen, who, according to Aristotle, is the ideal candidate for virtue given his natural temperament[3] and moral upbringing.[4] So, the focus in the *EN* is on those things that are "up to us." But if we are to investigate how our natural dispositions factor into an account of responsibility, we must turn to the *Rhetoric*. Since the *Rhetoric* is written for the orator whose aim is to persuade the ordinary person, the accounts of the various characters (*ēthē*), or temperaments, extend beyond the population that is in mind in the *EN*. *Rhetoric* II.12-14 instead emphasize the differences in natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) that accompany age, rather than choice or habituation. Here the audience the orator will address is composed of ordinary people who may not have had the ideal upbringing and whose characters are fragmented enough so that they are capable of being persuaded in either direction.

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described as becoming hardened over time at II.13 (1991, p. 173). She also claims that the chapter on the youth (II.12) shows how experience, particularly of disappointment and failure, is needed to address a youth's naivety and overconfidence (1991, p. 197). Only in passing does Sherman note that it may be unfair to blame a youth for her mistakes given her lack of experience (1991, p. 198). (It is this final claim of Sherman's that is elaborated and textually supported in this paper.) Lastly, despite being published a year after his 1994 article exploring the accounts of temperaments given in *Rhetoric* II.12-14, Garver mentions nothing from these passages in his book, *Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric*. All the focus on character is given to the character of the orator as the best means of persuasion (Garver, 1995). Overall, these chapters in the *Rhetoric* are either ignored altogether or are mentioned without more than a nod to an Aristotelian account of responsibility.

[2] For more on the audience of the *EN*, see Tessitore (1996, esp. ch.1) where he argues that the *EN* is best read in light of the type of audience Aristotle is addressing – namely those who will go on to become either legislators or philosophers.

[3] (*Politics*, VII.7).

[4] The audience for Aristotle's *EN* is one who knows the "that" and seeks to understand the "why" of ethical truths (*EN*, I.4, 1095b4-8). In other words, he has had a good enough upbringing to know that courage is a noble trait and that certain actions are courageous.

Thus, the *Rhetoric* offers more insight into the kind of people we encounter in our everyday lives and for this reason it may broaden the account of responsibility found in the *EN* because from it we can construct a less stringent account of responsibility that applies to the ordinary person.

This chapter examines the relationship between these two accounts. I argue that from the *Rhetoric* we can construct an account of responsibility that applies to more people and judges responsibility on the basis of natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) and one's capacity for virtue rather than fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikai*). While I acknowledge the effect that age may have on a person who has a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) – it affects the mean for that individual – I focus on the natural dispositions of the ordinary person, arguing that her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) may be understood as a rational capacity (*dynamis meta logou*) in some respects, and a developed state (*hexis*) in other respects. An example of this is having what Aristotle calls "natural virtue"; without full virtue, one's trait will not always be expressed in action, but one will still have inclinations in the direction of that virtue. The upshot is that this account from the *Rhetoric* can be taken together with the account in the *EN* to present a fuller understanding of character and responsibility in Aristotle's work.

II. The *Rhetoric* on Temperament and Responsibility

I begin this section with a disclaimer. The chapters in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that treat the various temperaments (*ēthē*)[5] that accompany age rely on stereotypes of the young person, person in his prime, and old person, describing each age in ways Aristotle thinks captures the tendencies of most, but not necessarily all, members of the group. While some of the descriptions

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[5] The word *ēthos* is a general term for character in Aristotle. It can refer to mere temperaments or fully formed states (*hexeis prohairetikai*). So, while Aristotle refers to *ēthē* (the plural of *ēthos*) in the chapters I will discuss, I specify that he is talking about temperaments, which are *ēthē* that are composed of natural dispositions or *phusikai hexeis* rather than fully formed states or *hexeis prohairetikē*. To do this, I use the word "temperament," but in parenthesis I include "*phusikai hexeis*" (natural dispositions).

seem apt – young people do seem to be rather passionate creatures – I do not intend to endorse all that Aristotle says as necessarily characteristic of each age group. I refrain from doing so for various reasons: while there may be some universal human tendencies that accompany age, I do not take the men of the Ancient Greek world to be a timeless representation of people of all cultures or genders. I further acknowledge that while Aristotle relies on stereotypes, he makes no indication that his description of the temperaments (*ēthē*) are to be taken as exhaustive or exclusive. In other words, a young person may tend to have other temperaments not explicitly stated in his chapter on the youth and people of other ages may have inclinations that are stereotypical of the young. For Aristotle claims it does not matter if a person is young in years or in character (*ēthos*) (*EN*, I.3, 1095a7).

Still, there may be a further worry that Aristotle's observations are not grounded in the kind of rigorous study characteristic of contemporary social psychologists who work on character and personality. So the more empirically-minded philosophers and ethicists may be concerned that Aristotle's armchair psychology fails to meet the current standards of scientific observation. Because of these worries, I suspend judgment concerning the soundness of Aristotle's claims and attempt to show that the study of these chapters on temperament (*ēthos*) are of value because of the implicit principles Aristotle uses in his description of them that suggest various degrees of responsibility. In my discussion of these temperaments (*ēthē*), then, my aim is not to endorse each claim, but to infer an Aristotelian account of responsibility from the kind of evaluative language Aristotle uses in describing them.

In the first subsection, I compare moral development in the *EN* with natural development found in Aristotle's discussion of the various ages and their characteristics in the *Rhetoric*. The moral development of the youth in the *EN* requires the training of the appetite as well as the

exercise of perceptive faculties that attempt to mold the natural into virtue. By contrast, the *Rhetoric* gives a descriptive account of the development from youth to old age that occurs naturally, and thus seems to make virtue and vice continuous with other natural conditions like aging. The second subsection focuses more explicitly on the contrast between the application of responsibility in the *EN* and that in the *Rhetoric*, as is seen in the virtues and vices that are attributed to the various ages and what Aristotle names as the causes of their wrongdoings. I construct an account of responsibility in the *Rhetoric* that is broader compared to the account of responsibility in *EN* III.1-5 insofar as it can apply to more people.

1. Moral and natural development. The contrast between *EN* and *Rhetoric* when it comes to the development of character corresponds to two degrees of character (*ēthos*): fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikai*) in the *EN* and temperaments (*ēthē*), which are composed of natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) in the *Rhetoric*. In both texts, Aristotle uses *ēthos* as a general term that refers sometimes to settled states (*hexeis* or *hexeis prohairetikai*), other times to natural or innate dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) which may develop as we age or are those with which we are born. But, while a fully settled state such as virtue is "neither natural nor contrary to nature" in the *EN* (II.1, 1103a24-25), the temperaments (*ēthē*) of the *Rhetoric* are composed of natural dispositions – they have not been molded into virtue, but they can be if the agent were to undergo the process of conscious habituation that I outlined in chapter three. The former (*hexis prohairetikē*) develops through repetition and practice, and the latter (*phusikai hexeis*) develop naturally and over time, that is, without conscious habituation.

The significance of the distinction between moral development in *EN* and natural development in the *Rhetoric* lies in the degree to which one's character is formed. While the fully formed character of the *EN* will be more stable and dependable, the naturally developed

character of the *Rhetoric* will be fragmented and unreliable. This has implications for one's

responsibility for one's character. For a person is held responsible to a greater extent for her

consciously habituated state than a person whose temperament was not the result of conscious

habituation and choice. As adults capable of choice, each is held responsible for actions if they

are performed voluntarily or result from their characters. But, they are also held responsible in

proportion to their capacity to have developed a virtuous state. Whereas the person of the *EN*

whose fully habituated state is the result of conscious habituation has a greater capacity for

virtue, the ordinary person of the *Rhetoric* has a lesser capacity and thus is held responsible to a

lesser degree.[6]

To understand natural development, we can look to Aristotle's descriptive accounts of

the various temperaments that accompany age. He introduces the chapters on temperaments

(*ēthē*), saying,

> Let us now consider the various types of human [temperament] (*ēthē*), in relation to the
> emotions (*pathē*) and moral qualities (*hexeis*), showing how they correspond to our
> various ages and fortunes. By emotions I mean anger, desire, and the like; these have
> been discussed already. By moral qualities, I mean virtues (*aretas*) and vices (*kakias*);
> these also have been discussed already, as well as the various things that various types of
> men tend to will and to do. By ages I mean youth, the prime of life, and old age (tr.
> Roberts, II.12, 1388b31-1389a1).

In each of the chapters on age, Aristotle gives an account that focuses on the sorts of emotions

and moral qualities that tend to accompany age. The young people he discusses here are likely

young adults – those in their late teens or early twenties. Aristotle is not specific about their ages,

but since they are potential members of a political audience, they must be older than the children

he has in mind when he emphasizes the importance of a good upbringing in the *EN*. Aristotle

claims that the prime of life in relation to one's physical body occurs at age 35 and in relation to

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[6] See section III.3 for more on responsibility for a capacity.

one's mental ability occurs at age 49 (*Rhetoric*, II.13, 1390b10). He claims that the old person is past his prime, though he does not specify how much older he is than the person in his prime (II.14, 1389b11).

As we will see, the development of temperaments (*ēthē*) according to age occurs as a person ages and her body undergoes physical changes. For Aristotle's descriptions of the temperaments (*ēthē*) highlight many of the changes in one's appetite and passions. By contrast, throughout the process of moral development described in the *EN*, a person develops as her repetitive practices form her state. The practices in which she engages are necessary for the development process. As I have argued in chapter three, this process engages the child's cognitive faculties and involves making choices in a limited sense. Once the child becomes an adult, she begins the second stage of moral development where she can make choices that determine the quality of her character (*ēthos*). In other words, the moral development described in the *EN* is a conscious one. By contrast, the characters distinguished according to the natural dispositions which appear at different ages is tied essentially to one's lifetime and the changes one undergoes as one ages. The natural development occurs not because of some conscious or semi-conscious choice in the individual – though it can be affected by conscious habituation. Rather, natural development occurs as a person's feelings and inclinations naturally change over time. For example, the excessive appetites characteristic of young people weaken with age as the body undergoes physical change. So, the account of development given in *EN* differs from that which is given in the *Rhetoric* since the former emphasizes the exercise of one's reason in conscious choice and action and the latter emphasizes the physical changes a person experiences.

In comparison to the moral development that occurs through practice, the natural development that comes with age suggests a different model of responsibility. In the *EN*, full

responsibility is assigned to those acting from fully developed states (II.4, 1105a34). But, acting

from a temperament (*ēthē*) that has developed naturally, that is, simply on account of age and the

underlying feelings that accompany it, may suggest that assigning responsibility to those people

is not as stringent as the account in the *EN* that requires voluntary action and the capacity for

choice. For Aristotle describes the character of the virtuous person in the *EN* as a *hexis*

prohairetikē – a state imbedded with choice. Yet, one's natural dispositions are not the result of

conscious choice. Any responsibility one might have for them, then, would have to be

diminished if it is to be fair. The evaluative language Aristotle uses to discuss these

temperaments (*ēthē*) suggests such a mitigated account.

2. Responsibility in the *Rhetoric*. Shortly before Aristotle introduces the temperaments

(*ēthē*) in the *Rhetoric*, he claims that they are important for the orator to know since they

regularly accompany certain actions.

> We must consider what kinds of actions and of people usually go together; for while
> there are no definite kinds of actions associated with the fact that a man is fair or dark,
> tall or short, it does make a difference if he is young or old, just or unjust (tr. Roberts,
> I.10, 1369a24-26).

Aristotle claims that just as a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) with traits such as being

just or unjust correspond to just or unjust actions, so too does age correspond to certain

tendencies. Aristotle opens his chapters on the various ages (youth, prime of life, and old) by

stating that he will examine the temperaments (*ēthē*) that tend to accompany each.[7] The

temperaments he introduces can be categorized into four aspects of the person: desires, emotions,

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[7] In chapter six, I broaden Aristotle's use of temperament (*ēthē*) according to age. I assume that while these may be stereotypical temperaments (*ēthē*) of the young, old, and person in her prime, nothing Aristotle says conflicts with the idea that anyone, regardless of age, could have these temperaments (*ēthē*). In fact, he claims in the *EN* that "it does not matter whether [a person] is young in years or immature in character (*ēthos*)" (I.4, 1095a7).

attitudes, and actions.[89] So for example, he describes the temperament of the young as follows. Their desires are strong, especially bodily desires, fickle, and violent though fleeting (II.12, 1389a3-9). Their emotions include being hot-tempered, easily angered, and lovers of honor (II.12, 1389a9-16). Their attitudes are described as their tendency to see the good rather than the bad. They're hopeful, confident, courageous, and high-minded (II.12, 1389a17-34). Lastly, they tend to act in accordance with what's noble rather than what's useful. Their wrongdoings are caused by arrogance or insolence (*hubris*). Their actions are often excessive and they are ready to show pity and enjoy themselves (II.12, 1389a34-1389b12).

Of the old, Aristotle claims that their desires are weak or nonexistent. Of their emotions, he claims they have violent, but weak anger (II.13, 1390a11-16). Of their attitudes, Aristotle claims they are cautious, pessimistic, cynical, distrustful, small-minded, ungenerous, and cowardly. Their fondness for living and selfishness causes their attention to be fixed on the useful rather than the noble. Further, they care not for what others think of them and they are not hopeful (II.13, 1389b15-1390a6). Lastly, Aristotle claims that their actions are aimed at what's useful rather than what's noble and their wrongdoings are caused by malice (*kakourgia*) (II.13, 1390a16-24).

After describing the temperaments of the young and old person, Aristotle describes those in their prime. He claims that they enjoy the advantages of the young and the old and are free from their defects. So, their emotions and desires are not excessive like the young person or deficient as those of the old person (II.14, 1390b2-3). Their attitudes align more with reality,

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[8] Consider the similarity to the CAPS model of personality, popular among social psychologists who define personality with respect to both cognitive and affective units that issue in "behavioral signatures." See Snow (2010, ch. 1) for more discussion on the CAPS model. For criticism, see Doris (2002, pp. 76-85) and Miller (2014a, ch.5).

[9] Although Aristotle does not explicitly categorize the natural dispositions this way, they seem to fall under these categories. See Grimaldi (1988) who makes such a categorization.

neither trusting nor distrusting too much, being overly confident nor overly fearful (II.14, 1390a30-33). They are temperate like the old person and courageous like the young one (II.14, 1390a30-1390b6). Lastly, they act both for what is noble and for what is useful (II.14, 1390a34-1390b1).

As I have stated at the opening of this section, my aim in cataloging the various temperaments is to infer the principle behind Aristotle's remarks and not to endorse each claim as definitely characteristic of all, or even most, people who are members in each age group. So, while some of Aristotle's claims seem plausible, what is interesting here is what we can infer about what counts as a temperament. Within the three age groups, Aristotle focuses on temperamental inclinations concerning one's desires, emotions, attitudes, and actions. The young, for instance, have a temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) that is characterized by excess; they are courageous only because of an excess of confidence and lack self-control because of their strong desires. Their temperaments, thus, consist of a variety of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral inclinations that are not necessarily unified: a young person's excessive desire for bodily pleasure may conflict with her love of the noble. Further, they are natural states; they develop according to one's physical state rather than because of one's choices.

Still, I do not take his list of temperaments as exhaustive of the types of temperaments a person can have. For Aristotle has an agenda in writing these chapters on the temperaments (*ēthē*) that focuses on those features that are most relevant to an orator who will attempt to persuade his audience to choose a political course of action, convict or release a defendant, or to praise or blame a person. Thus, his concern is only for the inclinations that are most relevant to those types of situations. A person's being inhibited, for example, is just one temperament we could add to the list that would be consistent with everything Aristotle says here, but is

unnecessary for an orator to consider since one's being shy will not bear much on whether, for

example, she finds a person guilty or innocent compared to her readiness to pity others.

Having discussed the framework within which Aristotle catalogues the temperaments

(*ēthē*) that accompany age, we can now consider how the particular temperaments (*ēthē*) he

attributes to each age group are described with evaluative language suggestive of an implicit

account of responsibility. Of the youth, Aristotle says they have strong appetites, fickle desires,

lack self-control, are inexperienced, and that they are easily angered (II.12, 1389a3-10, 17-18).

These characteristics coincide with claims from *EN* about children lacking experience and being

guided by feelings (*EN*, I.3, 1095a3-5). To some extent, then, a youth will live like a child whose

actions are motivated by his passions rather than reason. Yet, at *Rhetoric* II.12, Aristotle also

gives an account that shows that as a child becomes an older youth, he develops certain

inclinations that become characteristic of him; his *hexis* has begun to form with respect to his

emotions, feelings, and he has begun to form a conception of the good – one that he has acquired

through early moral habituation. And while his behavior is still motivated by his appetite, he

develops an appetite for the noble. When Aristotle discusses the attitudes and actions of the

youth, the contrast to *EN* is more salient.

> [The young] look at the good side rather than the bad, not having yet witnessed many instances of wickedness. They trust others readily…They are sanguine; nature warms their blood as though with excess wine; and besides that, they have not yet often been cheated… they have exalted notions because they have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations… [They] would always rather choose (*hairountai*) noble deeds than useful ones: their lives are regulated more by moral feeling (*ēthei*) than by reasoning; and whereas reasoning leads us to choose what is useful, moral goodness (*aretē*) leads us to choose what is noble (*kalon*) (tr. Roberts, *Rhetoric*, II.12, 1389a33-35).

Concerning their attitudes, Aristotle here claims that the young are hopeful, high-minded, and

see the good over the bad because of their lack of experience. When it comes to their actions, he

claims they live by character (*ēthos*)[10] and aim at the noble (*kalon*). And so, by considering the passage on the youth from the *Rhetoric*, we can see there is progression between the very young child in *EN* and a youth who shows a greater capacity for virtue in his inclinations towards the noble. Both in his attitudes and actions, a youth expresses an attraction to the noble and so these natural inclinations partially constitute his temperament (*phusikai hexeis*). The youth is not outside the realm of moral judgment; he not only seeks the noble, but is naturally courageous (II.12, 1389a26), a virtue which is to be praised in *EN* when it is accompanied by practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) (VI.13, 1144b10).[11]

Insofar as they incline towards the noble and contain a natural disposition for courage, the temperaments of the youth are not morally neutral. In other words, they provide some grounds for assigning responsibility. Still, they are not held as responsible for the actions that follow from their temperaments as they would be if they were fully virtuous or vicious. For instance, Aristotle claims in the *Rhetoric* that the wrongs the youth commit are not on account of vice:

> And the wrongs [youth] commit come from insolence (*hubris*), not maliciousness (*kakourgia*) (tr. Garver, II.12, 1389b7-8).

Rather than vice, the wrongs that a young person commits are attributed to *hubris*. In an earlier chapter on anger (II.2), Aristotle describes acts *hubris* when he catalogues three types of

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[10] While it is evident that *ēthos* is a general word for character in Aristotle, in these passages on age, he uses *ēthos* in a narrower sense – one that has moral implications. For he claims that character (*ēthos*) is concerned with virtue (*aretē*) (*Rhetoric*, II.13, 1390a18).

[11] Consider Garver: "The *dynameis* of the ages of men both are, and are not, outside moral evaluation. They tend towards certain ends… but they, like the akratic and the self-controlled, lack effective *prohairesis*, and so stand outside moral judgment in the fullest sense" (1994, p. 188).

slighting – the active holding of an opinion that something is valueless (II.2, 1378b10) – one of

which is insolence (*hubris*).[12]

> Insolence (*hubris*) is also a form of slighting, since it consists in doing and saying things
> that cause shame to the victim, not in order that anything may happen to yourself, or
> because anything has happened to yourself, but simply for the pleasure involved.
> (Retaliation is not 'insolence,' but vengeance.) The cause of the pleasure thus enjoyed by
> the insolent man is that he thinks himself greatly superior to others when ill-treating
> them. That is why youths and rich men are insolent (*hubristai*); they think themselves
> superior when they show insolence (tr. Roberts, II.2, 1378b22-28).

While this passage concerns acts of *hubris*, rather than *hubris* as a trait, considering it helps

provide context for an understanding of the significance of the term in Aristotle's view. If acts of

hubris are those aimed at pleasure, then a hubristic person is one whose wrongdoings are often

motivated by her desire for a certain kind of pleasure: the pleasure of feeling superior to others.

Aristotle's claim that the cause of the young person's wrongdoing is insolence (*hubris*) suggests

that her wrongdoings are ultimately caused by her excessive appetite and lacks the intention to

harm others. Although insolence (*hubris*) may carry the full blameworthiness of a vice in one's

willingness to do wrong to others for the sake of passing one's ego, Aristotle seems to diminish

blame when it comes to calling a young person insolent rather than malicious. Compare how

Roberts translates the line quoted above where Aristotle states the young person's wrongdoing is

on account of insolence (*hubris*), not malice (*kakourgia*):

> If they do wrong to others, it is because they mean to insult them, not to do them actual
> harm (II.12, 1389b7-8).

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[12] While Roberts translates *hubris* as "insolence," another translation of *hubris* that makes sense here is "arrogance."
Insolence refers to the aspect of the trait where a young person is ready to insult or disrespect others, but since this is
done for the sake of feeling superior, arrogance also captures part of this notion. Neither English word is a perfect fit
and so I follow translators by using "insolence," though I sometimes refer to *hubris* as "arrogance" when that aspect
of the trait is being referred to.

The suggestion that both Garver[13] and Roberts make is that wrongs caused by insolence

(*hubris*) are not as serious or blameworthy than those caused by malice (*kakourgia*) because they

do not involve the intention to harm another person. While Grimaldi challenges this

understanding, the evidence he presents in support of his objection is very weak. For he claims

that at *Politics* IV.11, 1295b9-11, Aristotle claims that wrong actions (*adikēmata*) are caused by

either *hubris* or *kakourgia* and that the former are serious wrongdoings, while the latter are minor

(Grimaldi, p. 199). But, what Aristotle actually says in the passage that Grimaldi quotes is that

those who are excessively wealthy, beautiful, strong, or well-born "turn more to *hubris* and

grand wickedness (*megaloponēros*)" while those who are the opposite, excessively poor, ugly, or

weak "to malice (*kakourgia*) and petty wickedness (*microponeroi*)" (IV.11, 1295b9-11). First,

Aristotle does not seem to be identifying *hubris* with "grand wickedness" and *kakourgia* with

"petty wickedness," but rather, identifying two characteristic features of the rich, well-born, and

powerful compared to the poor, ugly, and weak. Second, he does not mention the young here,

who he claims in *Rhetoric* II.12 also act from *hubris*. Thus, his description may not be intended

to apply to them. A person may act from *hubris*, but may not necessarily be wicked.

Still, Grimaldi identifies two kinds of wrongdoing (*adikēmata*) in Aristotle: one issues

from deliberation and choice and the other from emotion.[14] Grimaldi claims that it's not clear

which of these kinds are being discussed in the chapter on the youth, but given that the

temperaments Aristotle describes are constituted by a set of emotional inclinations and lack

choice, it is most plausible to think the wrongdoings are caused by emotion. Aristotle claims that

actions caused by emotion are voluntary,[15] but without choice, are not grounds for full

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[13] (1994, p.181)

[14] Cf. (*Rhetoric*, I.13, 1373b36)

responsibility.[16] Thus, the young person's wrongdoing, insofar as it is caused by his excessive

desire for superiority and not a desire to actually harm another,[17] is not as serious an offense as

one caused by maliciousness (*kakourgia*), which includes a desire to harm. Perhaps the hazing

that is often done by fraternity and sorority members is an example of the insolence or arrogance

(*hubris*) of the young. While this behavior is very unsavory and rightly condemned, the purpose

of the behavior seems to be aimed at the pleasure involved in embarrassing another person that

allows the young person to assert superiority over him or her. Of course in some cases the aim is

to humiliate another person completely, but I do not mean to include such cases here. Compared

to sadistic acts where the aim is to cause real harm to another and the pleasure is taken in the

suffering of the other, the act of hazing in order to cause mild embarrassment is not as

blameworthy. I use this example somewhat ambivalently since I recognize that there are many

instances of hazing that are excessive and do cause great harm. I restrict what I say here to more

"innocent" acts of hazing, such as making a male pledge where a dress to a party, rather than

other acts that put the individual in serious psychological or physical harm.

Still, the young person is not blameless for acting out of insolence (*hubris*) as he is at the

stage where he is capable of making choices that form his character. The young person who has

the disposition to insult others for the sake of pleasure has a bad trait even if his aim is not to do

harm. The wrong acts of the youths that are caused by insolence (*hubris*) are acts for which they

can be held responsible, at least to some degree, despite the lack of choice-imbedded state (*hexis*

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[15] (*EN*, III.2, 1111b6).

[16] (*Ibid*., 1111b8), (III.5, 1114a4-7), (VI.2, 1139a21).

[17] I suppose then that if the youth's superiority could be established another way, he or she would forgo causing harm.

prohairetikē) corresponding to them because the youth is capable of making right choices. By contrast, in the *EN*, it is acting from a habituated state (*hexis*) formed by choice (*prohairesis*) that confers responsibility (III.5, 1114a4-7), and a person with a habituated state who does wrong would be at best incontinent and at worse vicious, both of which are subject to blame in the *EN* (VI.4, 1148a3; III.5, 1113b14).[18]

Aristotle's description of the youth here calls to mind the incontinent person of the *EN*: just as the incontinent person has the right principle, but acts contrary to it when overcome by desire (*EN*, VII.8, 1151a6), young people choose (*hairountai*) the noble (*kalon*), but act wrongly because of their excessive appetites.[19] Yet, there is an important difference between the two. While the young person chooses (*hairountai*) the noble over the useful, he may only be capable of making choices that are not the result of complex deliberations about the ends that constitute a good life.[20] Alternately, the young person might be at the beginning of the second stage of moral habituation, where his rational faculty is developed and he is capable of making complex choices, but he has not yet fully formed his character.[21] So while the preference for the noble that is attributed to youth is indicated by *hairountai*, the verb for choosing, it either does not have the force of a choosing something before other things, or *prohairesis*, as is the case when the

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[18] Aristotle claims in the *EN* that both continence and incontinence are of the same kind (*genos*) as virtue and vice (VII.1, 1145b2), which he argued are states (*hexeis*) (II.5, 1106a14). States (*hexeis*), he claims, are the only things in soul that are subject to praise or blame (II.5, 1106a1-8). And, on my interpretation, his claim at *EN* III.5 that we are responsible for our virtuous and vicious actions because we are responsible for the states that cause them (III.5, 1114a20-22) refers to the kind of state that is solidified through one's choices, *viz.* a *hexis prohairetikē*, the state that is formed at the second stage of habituation when a young adult is old enough to deliberate and make choices in the fullest sense.

[19] That is, their excessive appetite for the pleasure of feeling superior causes them to act out of *hubris*.

[20] In fact, Aristotle is not confident that any audience member, regardless of age, can follow a long chain of reasoning (*Rhetoric*, I.2, 1357a3-4). And so, the orator must construct a shorter argument (*viz.* an enthymeme), that, like dialectic, relies on the common beliefs of the audience (I.1, 1356b33-34).

[21] He has some dispositions (*hexeis*) that have formed from his upbringing, but his character is still a mere temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) because he has not yet fully formed it into a *hexis prohairetikē*.

incontinent person has right reason, but acts contrary to it (VII.9, 1151a30; VII.10, 1152a20), or it is not a choice that issues from a fully formed state (*hexis prohairetikē*). Unlike the incontinent person who has right reason, the wrongdoings of the youth are caused by affective inclinations: "all their mistakes are in the direction of doing things excessively and vehemently…they love too much and hate too much, and the same with everything else" (II.12, 1389b3-5). Thus, the young person is not like the incontinent person who has the right reason, but acts wrongly because the young person has not yet developed right reason.

By showing the contrast between, first, the youth and the child in the *EN*, and, second, between the youth and the incontinent person, it is evident that the *Rhetoric* offers more insight into the temperaments (*ēthē*) of the youth. For, unlike the child of the *EN*, the youth do have tendencies that characterize them in some sense and are subject to moral judgment, but unlike the incontinent person, they have not acquired right reason and so are not going to be held as accountable for their actions as an adult in the *EN* is. Young people in the *Rhetoric* occupy some middle ground between having no responsibility for their actions or attitudes and having full responsibility for them.

To understand what explains the middle ground youths occupy, it is illuminating to compare what Aristotle says about them with what he says about the old in the following chapter (*Rhetoric*, II.13). For the old also have certain inclinations constituting a natural temperament (*phusikai hexeis*), yet, unlike young people, they seem to be held accountable for their wrongdoings to a greater degree. Aristotle claims that the old act for the sake of what is useful (*sumpheron*), not noble (*kalon*) and that their wrongdoings are from malice (*kakourgia*):

> In [the old person's] manner of life there is more calculation (*logismos*) than character (*ēthos*), for calculation is concerned with that which is useful (*sumpheron*), character with virtue (*aretē*). And the wrongs the old commit come from malice (*kakourgia*), not from insolence (*hubris*) (tr. Garver, II.13, 1390a16-19).

By contrast to the youth whose wrongdoings are on account of insolence (*hubris*), the old are seemingly held more responsible given that malice, because it involves the intention to harm another, is very close to a vice, if not itself a vice. *Kakourgia*, translated here as "malice," is also translated as "vice" [22] or "small-minded malice,"[23] suggesting some disagreement amongst scholars as to how serious this trait is. Aristotle does not offer any definition of *kakourgia* in his *EN*, *Politics*, or *Rhetoric*. He uses it to name the cause of the wrongdoings of the old, but not the young in the *Rhetoric* (II.13, 1390a18-19). He mentions it alongside the small-scale evils (*microponeroi*) of the poor in the *Politics* passage cited above (IV.11, 1295b9-11) and as a general word for "evildoing" in the *EN* (IX.3, 1165b13). So, we are left to guess whether it is a vice or a less serious, though still reproachable, cause of wrongdoing. Certainly our modern understanding of malice is that it is a terrible vice; Robert Adams, for one, claims malice involves opposing the good for its own sake and is thus a very serious vice.[24] That "malice" is too strong of a word to translate *kakourgia* is possible, but *kakourgia* is often used to refer to wickedness, evil, villainy, or vice.[25] The word comes from the verb *kakourgeō*, meaning wrongdoing, and describes the doings of a *kakourgos*, a criminal or wrongdoer. And so, insofar as it means wrongdoing, it involves the intention to harm rather than merely describe an act as being a bad or harmful one. For Aristotle talks about *kakourgia* as a cause of wrongdoings (*adikēmata*) and so being a *kakourgos* and harmful acts are distinct. Still, there are other senses of the word in other contexts. For example, Aristotle uses *kakourgeō* in a similar way as Plato

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[22] (tr. Freese, 1390a15).

[23] (Grimaldi, 1988, p. 199).

[24] (2009, p. 42).

[25] The LSJ suggests these various translations of *kakourgia*.

does when referring to arguments that one falsifies or corrupts (*Rhetoric*, III.2, 1404b39). In his *Republic*, Plato uses it to mean "bad workmanship" or "badly made" (422a). Despite the wide usage of the term, when speaking of people, it is often used to refer to their being villainous since they perform wrong actions intentionally. Thus, there are grounds for considering it a more serious flaw than arrogance or insolence (*hubris*), which does not include the intention to harm but to get pleasure.

We can compare the old people Aristotle describes to the inattentive people of *EN* III.5 as both seem to be responsible for having developed a faulty character. In response to the suggestion that an inattentive person may be exculpated, Aristotle claims that "only a totally insensible person (*anaisthētos*) would not know that a given type of activity is the source of the corresponding state (*hexis*)" (tr. Irwin, III.5, 1114a10-11). Aristotle argues that at the time a person is able to form her character (*hexis*), she is free to act in ways that determine its quality, that is, whether it has virtues or vices (III.5, 1114b30-1115a2). Brickhouse notes that this time must be sometime at the beginning of adulthood, when one is able to make choices that will fully form one's character (1991, pp. 143-144). It is not the child who is at the first stage of moral habituation who would be called *anaisthētos* for not knowing certain actions will form a bad state; he is still in the process of learning this. Even the young adult at the start of the second stage of moral habituation will not have had enough experience to always know better. The old person, by contrast, should know better on account of his life experiences. As Susan Meyer claims, the assumption Aristotle makes at III.5 is that a person already knows which activities are unjust or intemperate by virtue of his Athenian upbringing (1993, pp. 140-141). Thus, Aristotle argues that once a person has reached a certain age, she cannot appeal to ignorance or carelessness as an excuse for her behavior since she should have known better, assuming her

upbringing has been adequate.[26] Like the inattentive person, the old person could have chosen to act in ways that would have made her into a better person. Unlike the young person, who is approaching the time when he is able to form a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), the old person has passed this period and has failed to do so; she is still in many ways driven by her desires and feelings rather than thought and choice. She lives according to feeling (*kata pathos*) and not according to choice (*kata prohairesin*).[27]

Since a person acting from malice, which involves an intention to harm, possesses greater responsibility than a person acting from *hubris*, where this intention is lacking, the older person is more responsible for her behavior because she should have known better; she has a greater capacity to form virtue and has failed to take advantage of the opportunities to do so. A bad act caused by *hubris*, by contrast, does not necessarily involve knowledge of the badness of the act (i.e., the harm it causes) and the youth's ignorance may be excused in a way that an older person's cannot. Compared to the youth, the older person has a greater capacity for virtue on account of his extra years of experience that enable him to discern the good, and because of this the old person is more responsible for his wrong actions than on the young person for his.

The likeness of the older person to the inattentive person helps make an important distinction in assigning responsibility. If Aristotle's view is that a person is held responsible to the greatest degree on the basis of her fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) and actions that follow from these, he does not seem to properly acknowledge a person's capacity and responsibility for developing or failing to develop a good character. For if a person has been blessed with good genetic fortune and good social fortune, yet fails to develop virtue, he seems

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[26] In chapter five, I consider a not-so-adequate upbringing.

[27] See Lawrence (2011) for discussion on the move from living *kata pathos* to living *kata prohairesin*.

to be more blameworthy than a person who has suffered extraordinary abuses as a child and as a consequence develops vices willingly. Even if the former does not develop vices, he has less of an excuse for poor behavior than the latter who might commit the same bad act, but because she is vicious. In other words there is an important difference between how virtuous a person's character is and how much credit she deserves for her character. But, if acting from a fully developed state (*hexis prohairetikē*), like virtue or vice,[28] makes one a greater candidate for responsibility, than the latter is, contrary to intuition, more blameworthy than the former for one's character and what follows from it.

While it seems Aristotle gets things wrong when it comes to this particular case, the emphasis on one's upbringing helps clear things up. For Aristotle says a good upbringing "makes all the difference" when it comes to a child's moral development; a child needs to begin desiring the right things and developing her cognitive capacities to accurately perceive moral situations. When an upbringing is particularly heinous, a child will develop badly. Aristotle, for example, claims that a "bestial state," that is, a state that is characterized by taking pleasure in morbid things, can be caused by an abusive childhood (*EN*, VII.5, 1148b30). In this case, a person develops states that go beyond vices because of her tragic upbringing, but the same can apply to those who develop vices on account of a bad upbringing.[29] For this person has lacked adequate opportunity to develop virtue, and so has a lesser capacity for it. She is thus not as responsible for her vices as someone who had the opportunity to develop virtues, but failed to take it.[30] Still,

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[28] Even the incontinent person has a *hexis prohairetikē*. He merely fails to act from his character.

[29] Lawrence suggests there are multiple ways an upbringing could be bad. The child's educators and parents might have bad aims, bad means to develop good aims, or the child may have been neglected (2011, p. 250).

[30] At IV.3 of this chapter, I argue that responsibility for character should consider a person's capacity to have developed virtue. In my focus on age, I mention only the role that experience plays in developing this capacity. But, another factor that contributes to the capacity to develop virtue is the effect one's upbringing has on the awareness of what's good and bad, right and wrong. This factor is treated more fully in chapter five where my focus is on

neither of these people are as responsible as a person who had the opportunity to develop well, but chose to develop vices. This third person is most responsible because she is not only vicious, but had the opportunity to develop a virtuous character. Given her settled state (*hexis prohairetikē*), she is more responsible than the person who failed to develop virtues, despite his good upbringing, but who did not develop vices either. And she is more responsible for her character than the person whose vices were the result of a bad upbringing given her greater capacity to avoid vice.

The third and final passage of the *Rhetoric* that treats the feelings that accompany age focuses on those who are in their prime of life and describes them as having natural virtues. Aristotle claims that those in their prime of life have the virtues of youth and age, such as courage (*andreia*) and temperance (*sophrosunē*), and so comparing this person to the person of practical wisdom (*phronimos*) in the *EN* further shows the role of natural dispositions in a full account of responsibility. Aristotle says of the people in their prime:

> Their rule of conduct is neither the noble (*kalon*) nor the useful (*sumpheron*) alone, but both at once… [they] preserve the mean. It is the same in regard to passion (*thumos*) and desire (*epithumia*). Their self-control (*sophrosunē*) is combined with courage (*andreia*) and their courage with self-control, whereas in the young and old these qualities (*tauta*) are found separately; for the young are courageous (*andreioi*) but without self-control (*akolastoi*), the old are self-controlled (*sophrosunēs*) but cowardly (*deiloi*). Speaking generally, all the advantages that youth and age possess separately, those in the prime of life possess (*echousin*) combined; and all cases of excess or defect in the other two are replaced by due moderation and fitness (tr. Freese, *Rhetoric*, II.14, 1390b3-9).

Aristotle claims that the person in his prime possesses the advantages of youth and age, such as temperance (*sophrosunē*) and courage (*andreia*) (II.14, 1390b8-9). On first glance, it may seem that even without conscious habituation an individual will have virtue at the prime of his or her life as a settled state or *hexis*. For Aristotle claims those in their prime possess the virtues of

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social inheritances and I argue that a person's upbringing can inhibit her moral awareness, which limits the extent to which she can be held responsible.

temperance (*sophrosunē*) and courage (*andreia*), and so an individual will become virtuous at the

prime of his or her life, whether or not he or she has habituated virtuous traits through practice. If

this were so, there would be a discrepancy between the prudent person (*phronimos*) in *EN* and

the person in the prime of life in the *Rhetoric*. The prudent person (*phronimos*) is praised for

virtue that requires choice and habituation, yet the person at her prime is merely the result of

aging and is said to have virtues like courage and temperance, virtues that the youth and old are

said to have, respectively. Further, Aristotle claims of the person in her prime, "It is evident that

the character (*ēthos*) of those in the prime of life will be the mean between that of the other two

[youth and old age]" (tr. Freese, II.14, 1390a29).

Rather than liken the person in his prime to the prudent person, there is a better

connection to what Aristotle claims of "natural virtue" in the *EN*. He says,

> It seems that the various kinds of character (*ēthē*) inhere in all of us, somehow or other,
> by nature. We tend to be just, capable of self-control, and to show all our other character
> traits from the time of our birth.[31] Yet we still seek something more, the good in a fuller
> sense, and the possession of these traits in another way. For it is true that children and
> beasts are endowed with natural qualities or characteristics (*hai phusikai…hexeis*), but it
> is evident that without intelligence (*nous*) these are harmful. This much, to be sure, we do
> seem to notice: as in the case of a mighty body which, when it moves without vision,
> comes down with a mighty fall because it cannot see, so it is in the matter under
> discussion (tr. Ostwald, VI.13, 1144b4-12).

Aristotle thus distinguishes between natural and full virtue on account of the presence or absence

of intelligence (*nous*).[32] People have natural temperaments, and when these natural inclinations

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[31] I take Aristotle here to mean that we are born with certain natural temperaments that resemble the virtues insofar
as they constitute some of the emotional aspects of the virtue. Take for example his claim about natural bravery:
"The bravery caused by spirit would seem to be the most natural sort, and to be genuine bravery once it has also
acquired decision and the goal" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, III.8, 1117a3-6). Natural bravery thus includes the spirited part of the
virtue, but not the intellectual part.

[32] While it is *phronēsis* constitutes the intellectual virtue that accompanies moral virtue, Aristotle claims at VI.11
that *nous*, along with grasping primary terms and definitions, is also the faculty through which we perceive ultimate
particulars (VI.11, 1143a37-1143b1). The ultimate particular is the variable or contingent fact that is the starting
point of practical reasoning because it supplies the minor premise (VI.11, 1143b2-4). That is, *nous* perceives
ultimates at both ends; it grasps the unchangeable facts required for demonstrative reasoning as well as the

are good – like the courage of the youth or the temperance of the old or those in their prime – the trait is merely a natural virtue. But this is distinct from full virtue, i.e. virtue that includes practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). The temperament of the person in her prime is composed of natural states (*phusikai hexeis*); it is not a fully developed state (*hexis prohairetikē*). Natural virtue will not always be successful in causing the agent to perform a good action since it lacks the guidance of reason. Just as a strong body needs sight to guide its movements, so too does natural virtue need intelligence to achieve full virtue. Its lack of dependability indicates that natural virtue is not a virtuous state (*hexis prohairetikē*). And so, the natural state with which one is born is made up of inclinations, but unlike a virtuous or vicious state, which is consciously habituated, these natural states will not be expressed consistently in action. In fact, Aristotle claims that, despite being natural *virtues*, they will sometimes cause harm (VI.13, 1144b10).[33] For example, the natural spiritedness of a young male might make him naturally courageous, but without practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), his natural virtue might cause him to overreact when defending a bullied friend and become violent. Similarly, the temperaments (*ēthē*) described in the *Rhetoric* are not full habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikē*) and so they will too be capable of producing contrary actions.[34] The reason for this is that the set of traits are not unified as they are in a fully habituated state. The character of the ordinary person is fragmented and, as such, will display certain aspects of her character depending on the situation or her mood. So, for example, the young person Aristotle describes as having a love for the noble might act nobly when it

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particular, contingent fact required for practical reasoning (*Ibid.*). So, *nous* is involved in *phronēsis* by perceiving the particular fact that aids in good reasoning because universals are derived from particulars (VI.11, 1143b3-5). It is thus necessary for full moral virtue.

[33] Compare to Garver's claim that natural virtue will usually produce good actions (1994, p.187).

[34] I discuss such a capacity for contraries in detail in section III.2.

comes to courageously standing up for a bullied friend, but because of his excessive appetite, he

may fail to do so if it requires postponing his attendance at a party.[35] In situations where this

young person is free from other tempting pleasures, she will behave in noble ways, but alter the

situation or her mood,[36] and she will behave differently. By contrast, a person with a more

unified character, like the virtuous person, will consistently do the right thing because she will

neither be tempted by bodily pleasures nor will she be deterred from acting nobly when she is

not in the optimal mood or when acting nobly becomes difficult, such as when it involves

defending a friend against an attacker who may become violent.

Understanding the virtues attributed to the youth, old person, and person in her prime

(namely, courage and temperance) as natural virtues, and the vices of the young (intemperance)

and the old (cowardice) as natural vices, helps to explain the contrast between the temperaments

(*ēthē*) of the *Rhetoric* and the fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikē*) in the *EN*. Because the

temperaments are not fixed traits in the individual, the extent to which she is held responsible for

her temperament and what follows from it is mitigated. In the following section, I explain what it

means for these temperaments (*ēthē*) to be considered both rational capacities (*dynameis meta

logou*) and habituated states (*hexeis*) and how this understanding explains the broader sense of

responsibility assigned to them.

III. Another Model of Responsibility

The temperaments (*ēthe*) of the *Rhetoric* present a better picture of the ordinary person's

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[35] Compare to Darley and Batson's seminarians whose helping behavior was affected by their time constraints (or lack thereof) (1973). I discuss this study more in chapter six.

[36] Aristotle acknowledges the role the ordinary person's mood plays in determining the way she will think and choose; he spends the first eleven chapters of book II of the *Rhetoric* describing various emotions and how to arouse them so that the orator might put his audience in the right frame of mind and make it easier to persuade them. I will discuss this point in greater detail in relation to recent work in psychology in chapter six.

inclinations that aid in understanding Aristotle's wider notion of character (*ēthos*). For instance,

the ordinary citizens Aristotle describes in the *Rhetoric* are not the virtuous or vicious people of

the *EN*, but rather, people with ordinary temperaments (*phusikai hexeis*). This is evident in that

their behavior is highly susceptible to situational influences – being in a good mood might

change a person's decision concerning another's innocence. The orator of the *Rhetoric* relies on

the audience's capacity for opposite actions in order to persuade its members to choose one side

over another. By contrast, a person who has a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), may be

affected by the physical changes that occur as she ages, but has a more settled state and so her

behavior will not be as determined by these changes as it is by her choices. I consider the

relationship between a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) and the temperaments (*phusikai*

hexeis) of the *Rhetoric* in subsection 1. I then derive the broader account of responsibility that

corresponds to Aristotle's broad notion of character (*ēthos*).

1. Natural virtue and habituated states. If the traits attributed to the temperaments

(*phusikai hexeis*) at *Rhetoric* II.12-14 are simply natural virtues and vices, then the descriptive

account presents a picture of the tendencies that people of certain ages have while still

accounting for the fact that their behavior is often heavily influenced by situational factors.

Although the traits of the young, old person, and the person in her prime are not as fixed as the

traits of a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) would be, they still share some important

features: they can play some role in either predicting or explaining how one will react to one's

surroundings.[37] As I will argue, however, they will not tell the whole story, as the behavior of a

person who does not have a fully habituated state will often be influenced by the situation she is

in rather than her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*). A person's natural dispositions (*phusikai*

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[37] They also have an evaluative dimension insofar as they are praiseworthy or blameworthy. For a discussion of this often-neglected aspect of character in recent social psychology, see Kamtekar (2004, pp.461, 478-479).

hexeis) may affect her behavior in the following ways: (1) if she has yet to form a fully

habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) will contribute to her

behavior along with her circumstances and be a major factor in explaining action, or (2) if she

does have a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) will

cohere or conflict with her choices, making it easier or more difficult for her to act on them. The

latter person's temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) may help explain behavior, though it will not be as

predictive as her fully habituated traits (*hexeis prohairetikē*) are. Briefly stated, whether or not a

person has a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) plays

some role in either predicting or explaining her behavior.

In the latter case, a person, through practice and habituation, has formed a fully

habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) that determines her actions, but she may still have natural

inclinations that either make her decision making process easier (when her inclinations

correspond to what she chooses) or harder (when they do not). For example, an old person who

is naturally timid will find it difficult to behave in a courageous manner, but may overcome her

natural tendency and behave courageously if she has habituated the virtue courage. The strength

of the opposing tendency will partially determine, and help explain, her state: whether she is

virtuous or merely continent. One's natural inclinations may in some cases even help a person

strike the mean. In his discussion of generosity, Aristotle claims that the extravagant person (the

excessive vice corresponding to generosity) is not as bad as the ungenerous person because he

can be cured "by growing older and by poverty" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, IV.1, 1121a21). He further

claims that if this person is changed "by habituation or some other means… he will be generous"

(*EN*, tr. Irwin, IV.1, 1121a24-25). Thus, the weakening of one's appetite that comes with age can

turn one's vice into a virtue even if this change is caused by "other means" such as natural events

like aging or circumstantial ones like poverty. Lastly, the strength of one's temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) may make a person incontinent; she may aim at the good, but get overcome by opposing desires, such as those characteristic of the youth in the *Rhetoric* (II.12, 1389a2). For the person with a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), natural inclinations partially explain her behavior, though they are not as predictive of her behavior as her state (*hexis prohairetikē*) and choices are.

Let these brief remarks suggest a way in which the descriptive account of temperaments (*phusikai hexeis*) in the *Rhetoric* can either provide the physical underpinnings of the fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikai*) in the *EN* or account for the character of the ordinary person who does not consciously develop her character. For one who has a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*), age may play a more explanatory role than a predictive one. While a person who fully develops her character into a *hexis prohairetikē* trains her feelings and emotions to hit the mean, she is not totally unaffected by the physical changes that come with ages and thus her natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) might alter her traits, making them better or worse. But, the sorts of states marked by virtue, vice, continence, or incontinence do not exhaust the type of character one may have. In other words, there is character in the strong sense, signified by *hexis prohairetikē* – a state imbedded with choice – and character in the weaker sense, an *ēthos* composed of natural inclinations that are *hexeis*, but less dependable since they are the result of physical changes rather than one's conscious choices. The ordinary person does not have a character in the strong sense. Thus, her natural tendencies (her *phusikai hexeis* comprising her *ēthos*) will be more predictive and explanatory of her behavior and will be more easily manipulated by her circumstances. Without a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) that causes her to regularly behave in corresponding ways, her natural tendencies towards virtue or

vice, coupled with her circumstances, will be what influences her behavior. For the ordinary person can be swayed in one direction or another depending on how her circumstances are presented to her. In other words, her traits will be far more situationally dependent than those comprising a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*).[38]

2. The genus of the temperaments of the ordinary citizen. Drawing upon the metaphysical distinction between state (*hexis*) and capacity (*dynamis*), Susan Allard-Nelson argues that the temperaments (*ēthē*) of the ordinary are capacities (*dynameis*) because they make an agent capable of opposing behaviors (2001, pp. 254-255). Thinking of the temperaments in *Rhetoric* II.12-14 as capacities (*dynameis*) rather than states (*hexeis*) might initially have appeal as it accounts for the fact that the ordinary person's behavior is often heavily influenced by situational factors while still maintaining that she is the source of the action.[39] For Aristotle claims that a rational capacity is the capacity to produce contrary effects depending on the choice (*prohairesis*) or desire (*orexis*) of the agent, e.g. the art of medicine can produce either illness or health depending on how the doctor uses his art (*Metaphysics*, IX.2, 1046b4-5, 1048a11).

Like a rational capacity, the temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) of the ordinary person may cause him to choose the noble in some cases, but not others, such as when he is overcome with a desire for pleasure, like the young person of *Rhetoric* II.12. This person is not as dependable as the virtuous person who can be counted on to do the right thing when the situation calls for it.[40]

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[38] A person with a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*) will certainly be sensitive to her circumstances; she is able to make fine distinctions and see what actions are called for in a given situation. But, the way she reacts to her circumstances will be caused by a state of character that she has consciously habituated. If she has habituated virtue, her reaction will be the appropriate one. By contrast, the reactions of a person with an ordinary character can be manipulated since they are not guided by practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) or choice (*prohairesis*).

[39] Or, at least, one of the two sources of action. For a rational capacity requires choice or desire in order to produce an effect (*Metaphysics*, IX, 1048a11).

[40] The virtuous person's character is neither a rational nor an irrational capacity, but a *hexis*. Garver (1989a) argues that the *hexis* of the virtuous agent is a third kind of *dynamis* to perform morally virtuous acts and achieve

Allard-Nelson concludes that because the audience members can be persuaded to perform either

virtuous or vicious actions, their temperaments must be rational capacities rather than states

(*hexis*).

The initial appeal of conceiving of these temperaments (*ēthē*) as capacities is lost,

however, when we consider that the dispositions of the ordinary person do characterize her, even

if they are not as stable as a virtuous or vicious state. Aristotle argues that virtue is a state (*hexis*),

and the character (*ēthos*) of the virtuous person is a *hexis prohairetikē*; it is a state embedded

with choice. In other words, at the second stage of moral habituation, a person can become fully

virtuous by choosing to perform virtuous actions until she forms a corresponding state (*hexis*).

By contrast, the character (*ēthos*) of the ordinary person is composed of natural dispositions

(*phusikai hexeis*) constituting his temperament that may issue in certain characteristic behaviors,

but because they are not formed through choice (*prohairesis*), they are not as stable and thus the

agent is capable of opposites, like a rational capacity.[41] He has the capacity to go on to develop

virtue or vice and can be more easily persuaded or influenced by his environment to behave

virtuously or viciously.

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eudaimonia, somewhere between rational and irrational since it has elements of both. On the one hand, it is *prohairetikē* and so it requires choice as a rational capacity does. But, it differs from a rational capacity insofar as it does not require another choice for an action to be performed. For the virtuous person does not always choose in each circumstance what to do; sometimes the act is produced immediately from her character (*EN*, III.8, 1117a18-21). On the other hand, like an irrational *dynamis*, it is also deterministic of one's behavior when confronted with a particular situation. But, unlike an irrational *dynamis*, it involves choice and desire (pp. 11-13).

[41]Aristotle distinguishes between capacities (*dynameis*) and states (*hexeis*), claiming, "by 'capacities' (*dynameis*) I mean that by virtue of which we are said to be affected by these emotions, for example, the capacity which enables us to feel anger, pain, or pity; and by "characteristics" (*hexeis*) I mean the condition, either good or bad, in which we are in relation to the emotions (*EN*, II.5, tr. Ostwald, 1105b20-26). While Aristotle defines "capacity" or "faculty" (*dynamis*) as a capacity for feeling here, this differs from the definition of capacity in *Metaphysics* IX as a source of change either in another thing or upon oneself as another thing (1046a14). See Garver (1989a) for more discussion on *dynamis* in the *EN* compared to its definition in the *Metaphysics*. Garver argues that since the *EN* is dealing with a practical (versus theoretical) science, Aristotle moralizes the metaphysical distinction between *dynamis* and *hexis* by defining them with respect to *pathē* (p. 19).

Garver also argues, as I have, that temperaments (*ēthē*) resemble both rational capacities and states. While the calculative power of the old is like a neutral capacity for opposites (1994, p. 188), other characteristics, such as the old person's caution or temperance and the young person's courage or desire for the noble, are not neutral and instead show an inclination in one direction over the other (*Ibid.*, p.197). And so, Garver rejects the view that they are rational capacities since that would imply that they are neutral capacities for opposites.[42] He instead argues that the youth, prime, and old have types of temperaments (*ēthē*) "straddle the line" between capacity (*dynamis*) and state (*hexis*) (*Ibid.*, pp. 187-188), though he refers to them as *dynameis* throughout his article insofar as they are potentialities for virtues. Though Garver does not specify what it means to "straddle the line" between capacity and state, it becomes clearer if we specify that the temperament (*ēthos*) of the ordinary person is composed of natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*), and in that way is a *hexis*, but insofar as the ordinary person has the capacity to form full virtue or vice and is more vulnerable to persuasion than a fully virtuous or vicious person, her temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) is like a capacity for opposites. For while the temperaments in the *Rhetoric* tend towards virtue or vice, they are not fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikē*).

3. Responsibility for a temperament. If we reject the notion that a temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) is merely a rational capacity, we can understand how the ordinary person may be held responsible with respect to her temperament. A temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) certainly bears a similarity to a rational capacity insofar as it is capable of opposites: one can go on to habituate either virtue or vice, and one will perform neither virtuous nor vicious actions

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[42] Garver does not hold that the characters cannot be considered *dynamis* in any sense; he claims that these characters are *dynameis* that can be developed with *phronēsis* into full virtue (1994, p. 188). This sense of *dynameis* is one that identifies age with matter to be informed by *phronēsis* rather than with its capacity to produce contraries, which is true of things other than matter, such as the form of medicine.

predictably, that is, on the basis of her temperament alone. Still, its capacity for opposites is not free from inclinations towards one opposite over the other.[43] In this way, it is also a *hexis*, though not as determinate or stable as a *hexis prohairetikē*. Its inclinations, in the form of natural virtues or vices, are *phusikai hexeis*: they are natural, appetitive dispositions. But, these *hexeis* are not stable or dependable because they are not formed through choice (*prohairesis*), as full virtue and vice are. The genus of a temperament (*phusikai hexeis*), then, is in some ways a rational capacity and in others a state (*hexis*). For example, a person with a temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) characterized by natural courage will be inclined towards courage under favorable conditions or when successfully prompted,[44] but will also be capable of reacting with cowardice when conditions aren't as favorable.

These temperaments account for the individual's capacity to: (1) form a habituated state or (2) produce virtuous or vicious actions.[45] Insofar as the *EN* is concerned with the formation of a virtuous or vicious state, the natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) that accompany the various ages in the *Rhetoric* may be understood as mere capacities for being formed in a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*). Treating the temperaments also as capacities for either virtuous or vicious actions gives them a status analogous to a virtuous or vicious state insofar as they

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[43] The picture is further complicated if we consider how situationally sensitive a person's temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) is. This makes it similar also to an irrational capacity insofar as a person will often react in a certain way when presented with a kind of situation. Still, the relation is not one of necessity. While a person may tend to find a person innocent when in a friendly mood, her friendly mood does not guarantee her belief in another's innocence in the way that paper, when met with fire, will burn.

[44] Such as the prompting achieved by a good speech or by being put into a good mood, which may occur intentionally when the orator influences the audience's mood, or unintentionally, when a person has experienced a pleasant situation. More on the latter sort of influences in chapter six.

[45] It may be helpful to understand this distinction as one that distinguishes between first and second potentiality (See *De Anima* II.5, 417a22-32). By virtue of being human, an individual is in first potentiality to form a settled disposition, or *hexis*, one that is actualized in the corresponding activities. But, an individual's temperament as a second potency emphasizes its natural disposition towards certain types of acts, i.e. virtuous or vicious ones, similar to a *hexis*, but differing in its being also a capacity for a *hexis*.

produce moral actions, while also explaining why the status of a temperament is not at the level of a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*): it lacks choice (*prohairesis*) and is not fixed and dependable. The level of responsibility attributed to a temperament, then, will correspond to its lesser degree.[46]

According to this view, a person can thus be held responsible with respect to the sorts of inclinations or states (*hexeis*) she has as a result of her nature or upbringing,[47] coupled with her capacity to form a virtuous state and to perform virtuous actions. So, a person who has a great capacity for virtue, but fails to develop it will be more blameworthy than someone who has a lesser capacity and has failed on account of her bad character luck. Consequently, those in their youth, prime of life, or old age will act with varying levels of responsibility. For, a youth may be excused for behavior, such as harming others, that is not excused of someone in old age. Like the inattentive person of the *EN*, the old person has a greater capacity for forming her state[48] than the youth and this is what confers greater responsibility on her for her wrong actions compared to the young person. The difference in the way we assign responsibility according to one's capacity for virtue is indicated in our response to the person who performs a vicious action – the young person is punished to deter her from acting wrongly again for fear of punishment, while the adult may be corrected with an appeal to right reason. When it comes to natural virtues, the individual youth may be praised only to encourage her to cultivate her natural goodness into a virtuous state rather than praised as the person responsible for that trait; she is praised or blamed for the sake of

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[46] Similarly, Garver claims these temperaments (*ēthē*) exist inside the realm of moral judgment, but they are still not praise- or blameworthy in the fullest sense, i.e. in accordance with the standard account of responsibility in *EN*, because they lack choice (*prohairesis*) (*Ibid.*, p. 188).

[47] More on one's upbringing in chapter five.

[48] Assuming she has not developed in a depraved society, as Aristotle assumes of his intended audience.

aiding in her improvement of character rather than as a judgment of her praise- or blameworthiness. The temperance of the old may be treated as praiseworthy, but to a lesser extent than the temperance of the prudent person (*phronimos*) since the old person's temperance is explained better by her weaker appetite than by her correct ordering of her passions.[49]

Taking into account one's natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) with respect to one's capacity for virtue allows us to widen Aristotle's account of responsibility in a way that can assist in making valuable distinctions between having a good state and being responsible for that state. Certainly we can judge whether or not a person's inclinations are desirable or not and how well they approximate virtue. Yet, these judgments alone do not indicate responsibility. For one can receive praise for a positive quality, but not necessarily held responsible for it. In other words, we can distinguish between good or bad traits and being responsible for those traits and what follows from them. Garver admits the praise we would bestow upon a youth for her love of the noble is not praise in the fullest sense since actions following from such love do not involve choice (*prohairesis*) (1994, p. 188). Yet, he claims she rightly receives credit for her natural qualities (*Ibid*., p. 198). But, the praise we give seems to be more akin to admiration or a recognition of the good in others without holding her responsible for that good.[50] Taking into account her capacity for virtue is thus necessary for establishing whether or not she is responsible for her good state.

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[49] Although, as I have mentioned, Aristotle does claim that an extravagant person may become generous later in life as age corrects her excessive appetites. Perhaps the difference is that, when it comes to generosity, one's appetite contributes to the virtue, but is not the primary material with which the virtue is concerned. By contrast, temperance is primarily concerned with desire for pleasure and requires that that desire is not so weak as to make the person insensible rather than temperate.

[50] Though he acknowledges there are good reasons to distinguish the two, Garver thinks that what is subject to praise and what is to one is credit overlap (1994, p. 198).

So, the ordinary person is still held responsible for her character (*ēthos*) and what follows from it to the extent that she had the capacity know better and to develop virtue, and this will depend upon the quality and length of life experience an individual has.

IV. Conclusion

I have argued that the contrast between the *EN* and *Rhetoric* when it comes to assigning responsibility to individuals is on account of the different degrees of character for which we are held responsible. While the habituated states of the *EN* are fully habituated states (*hexis prohairetikē*), the temperaments of the *Rhetoric* span both rational capacities (*dynameis meta logou*) and states (*hexeis*). Both those with fully habituated states (*hexeis prohairetikē*) and those who have not developed a settled state are held responsible insofar as their actions are voluntary and they have to capacity to make choices from an abiding state. But, I have shown that these two criteria are not sufficient and must include a person's capacity to form a virtuous state and perform virtuous actions. This further entails that the temperaments (*ēthē*) of the *Rhetoric* are not all equally held responsible since with age comes a greater capacity for virtue – one's experience of the world makes one unable to claim ignorance.[51]

The virtue of this discussion extends beyond its exegetical value because it speaks to difficult issues of assigning responsibility on the basis natural dispositions that are unchosen. By presenting a view that does not exclude all natural or uncontrollable factors from influencing our moral judgments, we are closer to understanding the responsibility attached to our actions in the face of lucky or unlucky circumstances. And so we may avoid an account that is emphasizes self-sufficiency more than is reasonable given our human abilities. For our natural dispositions are not excluded from judgment even when we have not fully formed a habituated state (*hexis*

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[51] Unless, as I will argue in chapter five, their experience has been greatly limited by poor circumstances.

prohairetikē); though we may not control the sort of natural inclinations with which we are endowed, we exercise indirect control over them insofar as we are able to learn and choose the good.[52]

In some cases, however, we lack even indirect control over our ability to choose the good because we are in situations that impede on our moral awareness. Because our understanding requires experience, and our experience depends on the kind of environment in which we develop, we do not always have access to moral truths on account of unfortunate situational factors. For instance, a person who develops in a racist or sexist society may not be able to overcome her upbringing, and, as a result, form racist or sexist attitudes that affect her behavior without being aware that they are morally wrong. In this case, she lacks the ability to learn moral truths on account of her poor social circumstances and is thus not held responsible for her ignorance.[53] In chapter five, I consider the type of character luck that addresses the quality of one's upbringing within Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. Together with this chapter, we can identify the sources of the ordinary person's fragmented character and capacity for virtue (or lack thereof) – bad moral luck with respect to one's genetic and social inheritances and one's natural temperaments – by focusing on the development of those characters. In chapter six, I show how this account is consistent with the recent work done on character in social psychology.

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[52] We may choose to engage in certain actions that naturally develop our emotions in the right way, we exercise indirect control over those emotions (Kosman, 1999, p. 271). Similarly, we may form our natural dispositions into a virtuous state by learning what is good and choosing it.

[53] See Calhoun (1989) who argues that a person is only blameworthy for ignorance of progressive moral knowledge when it is publicly available.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL INHERITANCES:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND MORAL UNDERSTANDING

IN ARISTOTLE'S *POLITICS* AND *RHETORIC*

In previous chapters, I have established that good character luck at the start of a person's character development involves one's natural temperaments, which include genetic predispositions to virtue or vice or the temperaments that develop in relation to physical changes. Good character luck also involves one's social inheritances – being born into good social and political circumstances: one's family or friends and one's community. The focus of chapter four was on genetic inheritances and natural temperaments and their bearing on our being responsible for our characters. I now consider social inheritances: the effect that a person's circumstances have on her development, exercise of virtue, and on her responsibility for her character and what behavior follows from it. I bring together textual evidence from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Politics* that speak to his position on social inheritances. By including Aristotle's *Politics* in a discussion of his ethical theory, we are not only faithful to his conception of ethics as a part of politics, but we can better understand the significant role that one's political community plays in one's character development and character maintenance, especially when it comes to one's moral awareness. This important feature of Aristotle's ethical view squares well with, and even anticipates some of, the recent findings in social psychology that emphasize the significance of one's circumstances in her behavior and character traits, as I will show in chapter six.

I. Ethics, Politics, and the Non-Ideal in Aristotle

Though his discussion of virtue and character in the *EN* is focused on the individual's development and exercise of virtue and her attainment of happiness, or *eudaimonia*, Aristotle claims at the start that the study of ethics is subordinate to politics (*EN*, I.2, 1094b12). So while Aristotle limits himself to an analysis of the development and exercise of virtue in the individual in the *EN*, he all the while conceives of such a process as occurring within one's political community. For humans are political animals (*zōon politikon*) in need of a city to live well (*Politics*, I.2, 1253a2). And so, he closes the *EN* on a transitional note to the *Politics*. For he claims that to become good, one needs to live where there are good laws (X.9, 1179b34), and legislative science is a subcategory of political science (X.9, 1180b32). So, according to Aristotle, in order for statesmen to best educate young people, they should have knowledge of political, especially legislative, science. Another way to understand the contrast between the *EN* and *Politics*, as well as the need for both, then, is that the *EN* gives us an account of how virtue develops in the abstract, and the *Politics* is aimed at realizing this process in concrete world.

I have argued in chapter four that the *EN* presents a theory of virtue and character that assumes one has been met with good character luck. I also argued that this theory can be broadened with what Aristotle says about the ordinary person in the more empirically-grounded text, the *Rhetoric*. A similar claim can be made for the *Politics*. For while Aristotle's political investigation culminates into the presentation of the ideal constitution,[1] he claims that this

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[1] This assumes the traditional ordering of the texts. Some scholars think that the discussion of the ideal constitution in Books VII and VIII were originally meant to come between Books III and IV since Aristotle seems to be transitioning to talk of the ideal constitution at the end of Book III. But, it is possible that the transitional note found at the end of Book III was a later editorial addition not intended by Aristotle. Whichever the proper ordering of the books is of no matter here; nothing in my argument rests on whether Books VII and VIII come at the end or the middle of the *Politics*. See Kraut (2002, pp. 183-189), Miller (2009, pp. 540-541), or Destrée (2015, pp. 207-209) for discussion on the ordering of the books.

constitution is not practicable. Instead, it is "the city of our prayers" (*euchē*) (VII.4, 1325b36), and relies on a great deal of good luck: freedom from external obstacles (IV.1, 1288b23-24), access to the most favorable resources like size and quality of land (VII.4, 1325b40, VII.5, 1326b30), number (VII.4 1326b2) and quality of citizens (VII.4, 1326a 19-20; VII.7), and a good location (VII.6, 1327a35-37, VII.11-12). In short, he says, "We pray (*euchē*) that our *polis* will be ideally equipped with the goods that luck controls (*tuchē kuria*)" (tr. Reeve, VII.13, 1332a29).

Aristotle is quick to note that while this city depends on luck governing the conditions necessary for its development, it is not impossible (VII.4, 1326b39). Thus, even in his conception of an ideal constitution, Aristotle does not limit himself to an unreachable standard.[2] Throughout his discussion of the ideal constitution, he also makes suggestions that the ideal city will not necessarily be free from the difficulties that accompany life. For one thing, Aristotle includes laws that make provisions for citizens who are in need of food (VII.10, 1329b41-30a2). So, even in the ideal city, poverty may still exist. Aristotle also recognizes that even the best will err from time to time[3] so his ideal city will have laws to punish those who do wrong: adulterers will be punished with a loss of honor (VII.16, 1335b38-1336a2), and adults who say or do something forbidden will be dishonored in a way appropriate to a slave (VII.17, 1336b8-12).[4]

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[2] As Fred Miller claims, "Aristotle's ideal state is not a utopia in the literal sense of 'no place' (ou-topia)" (2009, p. 540). Compare to Kraut's claim that Aristotle is thinking of a utopian city where several virtuous people get together and start a new city, rather than perfect an already existing one (2002, p. 196). Destrée argues, by contrast to Kraut, that one can work to better his own constitution using Aristotle's advice for making oligarchies and democracies closer to polities, while still keeping an "eye on the ideal" (2015). See also Balot (2015, p. 120) who argues that a good education might help citizens of a polity move from aiming at stability, courage, and goods of the body to the higher goods of human flourishing.

[3] For related discussion on Aristotle's fallible *phronimos*, see Drefeinski (1996).

[4] Aristotle does not specify what this punishment would entail, but it would presumably be severe or humiliating for a free man to be publicly treated like a slave.

The laws Aristotle suggests are not limited to punishing wrongdoers, but also present safeguards to prevent virtuous citizens from acting against the common good. For example, although the citizens of the ideal city will be fully virtuous (VII.9, 1328b37), they will still at times be unable to help being biased towards laws that benefit themselves at the expense of others. So, Aristotle claims that citizens of the ideal city should each own two properties – one near the city and one near the sea – in order that they do not favor laws or political decisions that benefit one area over another (VII.10, 1330a15-6).[56]

Despite there being some realistic restrictions on the ideal constitution and city that make them not only possible, but also do not require extraordinary virtue in the citizens,[7] the ideal city is still far from what can be achieved through human effort alone and thus would be very rare. Recognizing this, Aristotle thinks it practical to dedicate most of the *Politics* to study of the various types of constitutions (Books III-IV), their causes of faction (Book V), and how to preserve them (Books V-VI). For he claims that the statesman must not only know how to establish a constitution, but how to correct one that is already in place, and these two endeavors take equal effort just as learning and correcting what one has learned require the same amount of effort (IV.1, 1289a1-4). For one thing, the statesman must understand that there are four senses of "best" (*aristos*): the best absolutely (*haplōs*), the best given one's ends, one's circumstances,

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[5] In the ideal city, resources will be abundant enough for all citizens to own two properties. For owning property is necessary to exercise virtue (*Politics*, II.5, 1263b10-11) and Aristotle also thinks that education and good birth commonly occurs amongst those with wealth (IV.8, 1293b36). So ideally, citizens with full virtue would own property.

[6] We might also consider Aristotle's discussion of music as a kind of leisurely activity in *Politics* VIII. This suggests that while the ideal city will be best suited for living the best life, which Aristotle identifies with the philosophical life of theoretical contemplation (*theoria*), not every citizen will be capable of philosophical activity and might approximate it by listening to (good) music, see Kraut (2002, p. 201) and Destrée (2013, pp. 317-318).

[7] See Kraut (2002, p. 209) who claims that even the natural virtue of the citizens of the ideal city is not exceptional. If this is so, then the ideal condition that the citizens are of a certain quality does not require an abundance luck with respect to one's genetic inheritances.

and the best in general (IV.1, 1288b20-34). While the ideal constitution is the best *haplōs*, other

constitutions are best in a qualified sense. If, for example, the goal of a city is wealth, the best

constitution that will further that goal is an oligarchy. The best given one's circumstances

suggests that one might need an oligarchy for a temporary period of time, say during a rebuilding

period where a city needs to increase its wealth.[8] While all three senses of "best" aside from the

best *haplōs* are good in some qualified way, it is the fourth kind, best for the most people or the

general best, at which Aristotle thinks the statesman should aim. For he claims that the polity – a

city ruled by the many for the sake of the common good[9] – is the best in general and most

practicable (IV.11, 1295a36-37) and that this is the best of the constitutions (IV.11, 1296a6). In

his further discussion of how to preserve constitutions, Aristotle's aim is to increase their

stability, which turns out to be making them closer to polities.[10] Thus, while we would certainly

prefer an ideal constitution, or at least to be ruled by the best person or people (kingship or

aristocracy), these constitutions are hard to come by. Instead, our goal is what is most practicable

and best suited for the average person, and so we should aim towards making our current

constitution more like a polity.[11] Aristotle's *Politics*, then, is a treatise that is concerned primarily

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[8] See Garver (2011, p. 115) who argues that knowing the best in general can help the best given the circumstances by making a current, bad constitution (the circumstances) closer to a polity (the best in general).

[9] For discussion on how we should understand the common good in Aristotle, see Morrison (2013). Those whose good the rule aims at are the citizens, though Aristotle thinks that slaves and women are benefited by their being ruled by their masters and husbands (*Politics*, I.5, 1254b14, 19-20).

[10] Preserving a tyranny as making it more like a polity: V.12 1315a40-b10, an oligarchy: V.8 1308a5-15 and VI. 6-7, a democracy: V. 8 1309a15-19 and VI. 5. See Garver (2011, ch. 5) and Destrée (2015) for discussion on preserving deviant constitutions by making them into polities.

[11] In his division of types of constitutions, Aristotle begins with the common division of rule by the one, the few, and the many, but further distinguishes between good and bad constitutions based on whether their rule aims at the interests of the ruler(s) or ruled (III.7 1279a28-31). So, rather than three constitutions distinguished by how many rulers they have, Aristotle finds six: three good and three bad. Of the good constitutions, he names kingship (rule by one), aristocracy (few), and polity (many). Of the bad constitutions, he names tyranny (rule by one), oligarchy (few), and democracy (many). (He later distinguishes between more specific types of each constitution in III.14 (kingships), IV.4 (oligarchies and democracies), IV.7 (aristocracies), IV. 9 (polities), IV. 10 (tyrannies), and VI.4

with the contingent factor of one's political context that affects the moral development and character of the ordinary person.

In sum, Aristotle's work in the *Politics* focuses on the non-ideal in ways that not only shed light on the nature of the ordinary person, but indicate that the ideal may not conform to as stringent a standard as previously thought – virtue and good living may be rare, but are not impossible for human beings. Focus on the non-ideal gives the *Politics* a practical value, presenting the statesman with information needed to make conditions better suited for his citizens' abilities to develop virtue and live a good life.[12] In what follows, I discuss the ways in which a person's character and moral awareness is affected by her social upbringing, according to Aristotle, before I consider what bearing this picture has on Aristotle's theory of responsibility.

II. Aristotle's Account of Moral Awareness in the *Politics*

1. The roles of law and family in upbringing and moral awareness. In the opening chapters of the *Politics*, Aristotle famously states that humans are by nature political animals (I.2, 1253a2-4). While this claim is made in the context of a larger argument concerning the naturalness of the *polis* and its aim at perfecting its citizens, it also means that a human being needs a city[13] to live well. For he claims that while the *polis* is originally constructed for the sake of living, it remains for the sake of living well (I.2, 1252b28-29). That a human requires a city

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(democracies).) He further claims that a polity is a mean between a democracy and an oligarchy (IV.9, 1294b13), and is best because it is most stable (IV.11, 1296a7). Aristotle claims we can order these six types of constitution from best to worst in the following way: aristocracy, kingship, polity, democracy, oligarchy, tyranny (IV.8), though some types of democracy are worse than some types of oligarchy if they are more extreme and further from the mean.

[12] See Balot (2015) for discussion on the relationship between the polity and human flourishing.

[13] I use "city" here broadly to refer to where citizens and others live under the laws of a particular constitution. So, this may include urban and rural areas.

for good living could be interpreted in different ways. One suggestion is that this is a statement

concerning her desire to form relationships with others. For even though Aristotle values self-

sufficiency (*EN* I.7, 1097b15; X.6, 1176b5), he explains that this is not to be taken as being

isolated from others:

> What we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself,
> living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and, in general
> for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political animal (*EN*, tr.
> Irwin, I.7, 1097b8-13).

We might also interpret the human need for a city as her need for a community in which to act

well. For Aristotle claims that one must not only be brought up well, but "must continue the

same practices and be habituated to them when they become men" (X.9, 1180a3). Aristotle's

claims address the need for a city if one is to develop into a morally good person and remain so.

For, Aristotle claims that all people[14] have the weapons (*hopla*)[15] for virtue (*aretē*) and practical

wisdom (*phronēsis*), but that without justice and law, these weapons can be used for opposite

purposes (*Politics*, I.2, 1253a32-34). In the *EN*, he articulates this point when he says that "it is

difficult…for someone to be trained correctly for virtue from his youth if he has not been

brought up under correct laws; for the many, especially the young, do not find it pleasant to live

in a temperate and resistant[16] way" (tr. Irwin, X.9, 1179b33-34). So, by living under the

constraints of good law, one is better able to develop her virtuous capacities since she will be

prevented from engaging in base actions.

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[14] "All people" for Aristotle, of course, only refers to Greek men.

[15] "Weapons" is a literal translation of *hopla*, but the idea is that human beings have the natural capacities to develop
virtue and practical wisdom. Compare to the opening of book II of the *EN* where Aristotle claims that virtue exists
neither by nature nor contrary to nature (1103a24-25). In other words, we have the capacity to develop virtue, but
without habituation or training, it will not develop on its own.

[16] Aristotle talks about the resistant person in book VII of the *EN*. This person is distinct from the continent or
temperate person, who is able to overcome pleasure, and instead is able to overcome pain (VII.7, 1150a13-16).

The benefits of living in a city are not limited to merely being prevented from doing wrong, but can also play a positive role in one's moral development. In his early remarks on habituation, Aristotle claims that legislators make citizens good by forming habits in them (*EN*, II.1, 1103b2-5). Aristotle later claims that in order for adults to receive proper teaching and listen to good arguments, they need to have been brought up well, which requires being brought up where there are good laws, in order that they form the "good soil" needed to learn (X.9, 1179b23, 32). This idea is repeated again at the close of the *EN* when Aristotle claims that legislators must "urge people toward virtue and exhort them to aim at the fine" (tr. Irwin, X.9, 1180a8). His earlier remarks provide examples of this very point:

> Now the law instructs us to do the actions of a brave person – for instance, not to leave the battle-line, or to flee, or to throw away our weapons; of a temperate person – not to commit adultery or wanton aggression; of a mild person – not to strike or revile another; and similarly requires actions in accord with other virtues, and prohibits actions in accord with the vices. The correctly established law does this correctly and the less carefully framed one does this worse (*EN*, tr. Irwin, V.1, 1129b19-25)

Thus, the legislator not only restrains citizens from performing bad actions, but promotes good behavior. Both contribute to forming good habits or the "good soil" from which an adult might eventually develop virtue. Later, we will see how civil law also promotes good living in adults by compelling them to continue to do good acts.

We recognize that it is not only civil laws that influence a child's development, but the child's parents also play a role. Aristotle acknowledges this, but claims that while parents contribute to the child's moral development, their role is not sufficient and good law is needed to supplement. The success parents have in motivating their children to desire the noble and act well is due to the natural affection between parents and their children (*EN*, X.9, 1180b5-7). But while this affection is initially a positive factor in the child's development, it is also a source of problems. For sometimes correcting the child needs to take on a harsher form than a parent is

willing to give on account of her love for the child. The law, by contrast, has the strength to compel good behavior while also being impartial and thus avoiding resentment in the child (*EN*, X.9, 1118a18-24).[17] For example, the youth who commits a burglary might be enabled by his soft and overly forgiving parents, but if he is caught and justly punished, his deviant behavior may be corrected. Since moral education is so important and is best done publicly, Aristotle concludes that it should not be left to a child's family, but should be a public endeavor (*EN*, X.9, 1180a30).[18] Even though giving individual attention to the child's unique needs can be better and more effective than using a general standard not tailored to individual differences, Aristotle argues that the person who educates the child will be even better if she is educated in legislative science (*EN*, X.9, 1180a31). And so, Aristotle transitions to the *Politics*.

Uncovering just how knowledge of legislation can help a statesman educate the people according to Aristotle reveals much about the important role a city plays in the development of virtue. It does not, on the face of it, seem like knowing which laws are best suited for which constitutions or how different existing (II.7-12) or theoretical constitutions (II.1-6) are organized can shed light on how to educate the citizen to be morally virtuous. But, because the goal (*telos*) of a *polis* is the happiness of its citizens (*Politics* I.2, 1252b29, III.6, 1278b22, III.9, 1280a31, VII.21324a25, and *EN* I.2, 1094b8), studying laws can help a legislator better realize this goal since good laws will be defined with respect to their ability to promote happiness for citizens, which for Aristotle requires moral virtue.

Still, there is an interesting tension in the *Politics* that concerns the ultimate end of Aristotle's *polis*. For while Aristotle has explicitly stated throughout the *EN* and the *Politics* that

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[17] See Blitz (1985) on the advantage of public over private moral education in relation to Aristotle's *EN*.

[18] See also (*Politics*, VIII.1 1337a21) where Aristotle argues that moral education should be communal since it has one end (happiness or *eudaimonia*).

the goal of the city is happiness, the goal of Books IV-VI of the *Politics* instead seems to be stability, rather than good living.[19] For, Aristotle describes the polity as the best constitution given its stability (*Politics*, IV.11, 1295a36-27, 1296a6) and in his discussion of correcting bad constitutions, the advice he gives is aimed at increasing stability, not promoting happiness.[20] This goal appears on the face of it to be worrisome since it seems wrong to advise a statesman on how to make, say, a tyranny last longer. Stabilizing a constitution to make it lasts longer is only a worthy goal if the constitution is good in the first place.

But, Aristotle has more in mind when he discusses stability so that it means more than durability. Making constitutions more stable involves more than merely making them last longer; it involves reforming them. So, for example, making an oligarchy more stable involves moving it closer to a polity, which is a better constitution, by spreading out political power to citizens who are not wealthy (V.8, 1309a19-20), such as the poor who typically comprise a majority of the population (III.9, 1279b36). Thus, the problem with stability as a goal is not in its neutrality in the face of corrupt regimes. It is instead that the goal is a far cry from human happiness as it favors mediocrity.[21] If the goal is mere stability, where might virtue and good living fit?

One suggestion is that making a current, though bad, constitution more stable is better than a complete overthrow.[22] While it is difficult to flourish in a corrupt regime, it would be impossible in a state of anarchy. Certainly this view would be endorsed by Aristotle, who thinks that a city is necessary for good living. But, stability might also just be the best we can do given

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[19] See Garver (2011, ch.5, esp. pp. 148-151) or Destree (2015) for more on stability as the final end of the *polis* in Books IV-VI. See Balot (2015) on Aristotle's discussion of the "mixed regime" and its relation to other mixed regimes in Greek politics as well as Aristotle's account of human flourishing.

[20] See footnote 10 above.

[21] Kraut describes the citizens as having "conventional decency" compared to full virtue (2002, p. 443).

[22] (Destrée, 2015, p. 214)

what we have. Without the resources that we "pray for," the best constitution will be one that best avoids faction and vice. If stability for Aristotle involves increasing the power of the middle class (IV.12, 1296b34-36),[23] and the middle class is composed of those who avoid the vices of the wealth and the poor (IV.11, 1295b8-11), then increasing stability involves spreading out power amongst those who will be better fit to rule – those who are the most virtuous of the bunch, even if they do not reach full virtue. A polity will not only be ruled by better people, but its constitution will impose laws on the people that make them more moderate by preventing any one group from hoarding the wealth or power. It will give more power to the middle class (*hoi mesoi*) whom Aristotle thinks have good habits and will listen to reason (IV.11, 1295b6). While the "virtues" of the middle class are not at the level of full virtue – they are not as durable as they rely heavily on one's circumstances to come into and remain in existence – they are a start.[24]

Thus, knowing legislative science can help a statesman best educate his citizens since the knowledge of the best constitution in general, *viz.* the polity, includes practical knowledge of how to stabilize existing constitutions in ways that help form good habits in the people. These habits can serve as the "good soil" upon which citizens might go on to develop virtue since they allow a person to listen to reason. Exactly what this entails is, again, a matter I leave to others writing on the cognitive understanding of moral habituation to determine, but one of the important contributions Aristotle makes it to prompt us to think of issues that empirical work can figure out. I will make a couple of plausible suggestions, but these are only imagined ways in which a person's upbringing might affect her cognitive development – they may turn out to be

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[23] Our current notion of the middle class is very broad and includes a range of economic classes, some who might better be described as upper or lower class. It is not clear exactly who composes the middle class of which Aristotle speaks, and what their means are. He does claim that (at least one type of) polity is ruled by the hoplite class – military who would own modest amounts of property (III.7, 1279b1-2).

[24] More on the virtues of the middle class in the following section.

unsupported by the evidence. A child's good habits might prevent her from being overcome by selfish desires that make practical reasoning difficult. For example, it may be hard to deliberate about how a person ought to help her neighbor if she gives undue weight to her own interests. This is precisely the problem with the incontinent person.[25] Another suggestion is that a person's upbringing affects her conception of what is good or valuable and sets the ends for her adult deliberations.[26] A bad upbringing will cause a person to value something that is not valuable or to an extent that exceeds its actual value. For example, a person born into great wealth might value money more than is reasonable and this can prevent him from obeying right reason when it comes to behaving temperately.[27]

2. Moral education and moral awareness. Aside from law and family, but no less important, the way children are educated contributes to their moral development. While knowledge of the laws that best suit a polity can aid in forming good habits in the citizens by preventing them from wrongdoing and setting up circumstances that help facilitate the development of good habits, formal education plays a more direct role in the citizens' development. It is obvious Aristotle thinks a good moral education program is extremely important to a person's moral development and her long-term goal of happiness given that he spends a majority of his discussion of the ideal constitution on the topic of education (VII.13-

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[25] See Burnyeat (1980, p. 85) who argues that to understand why a strong desire overrides reasoning in the incontinent person, one needs to understand how a person became incontinent in the first place.

[26] In other words, when a child has a good upbringing, she acquires the "that" of morality (*EN*, I.4, 1095b4-8).

[27] Cf. *Rhetoric*, II.16, 1391a18. The effect of wealth on one's ability to reason is often discussed by Aristotle, but relies on his own observations and stereotypes of the wealthy, poor, and middle-class. While his view is not grounded in the kind of rigorous study characteristic of contemporary work in the social sciences, it opens up an interesting question about the effect of wealth on one's moral or cognitive perception. This is one of the examples of the way in which Aristotle's views, though grounded in his "armchair psychology," raise questions that are relevant to psychologists today. See for instance Gasiorowska *et al* (2016) who show the damaging effect of wealth on generous behavior.

VIII). There, Aristotle presents the most concrete discussion of his program for moral education.

Unlike the abstract account in the *EN* where like actions will eventually develop like states,

Aristotle's discussion in the *Politics* includes concrete suggestions for moral education and also

hints at the ways in which the child will be cognitively engaged in his development. The latter

point is of particular interest for this chapter because it involves the way in which one's

upbringing affects one's moral awareness. He claims, for instance, that because the child's body

is undergoing too much change in the first five years of life, education should be focused solely

on physical development as learning may interfere with physical growth (VII.17, 1336a23-24).

But, between the ages five and seven, Aristotle says a child should prepare for intellectual

training, which involves being introduced to what she will eventually learn (VII.17, 1336b35-

37). Thus, Aristotle's account of habituation is not limited to the training of the body, though he

claims this should be done first as reason develops later (VII.15, 1334b22-24), but includes some

intellectual engagement insofar as a child begins to be exposed to lessons he will learn between

age seven and twenty-one (VII.17, 1336b40).

Another way Aristotle is concrete in his discussion of moral habituation in the *Politics*, as

well as how his plan incorporates both physical and cognitive training, is in his inclusion of

moral exemplars, guides, or good examples in the moral education of children.[28] From the start,

he thinks a child should be exposed to moral exemplars from plays, stories, and art (VII.17,

1336a29-31). A child is also in need of a moral guide (*agoge*). In his opening comments on

habituation at *EN* II.1, Aristotle says,

> The sources and means that develop each virtue also ruin it, just as they do in a craft. For
> playing the harp makes both good and bad harpists, and it is analogous in the case of
> builders and all the rest; for building well makes good builders, and building badly makes

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[28] See Zagzebski (forthcoming) who argues for an exemplarist interpretation of Aristotle where the virtues are
defined in terms of moral exemplars.

bad ones. Otherwise no teacher (*agoge*) would be needed, but everyone would be born a good or a bad craftsman (tr. Irwin, 1103b10-13).

While we do not want to overstate the similarity between virtue and craft in Aristotle,[29] there are still several instances where he does note some similarities between the two (II.2, 1104a9-10, 17, *Metaphysics*, 1049b28-1050a2), including this passage where there is a similarity in the way virtues and skills are developed.[30] In both cases, performing like actions will correspond to like states (II.1, 1103a32-1103b1) and a person will be in need of a teacher or guide (*agoge*) (II.1, 1103b13). The need for a guide in moral development is also highlighted in the *Eudemian Ethics*, in a passage mirroring the opening of *EN* II.1, where Aristotle states,

> Now character (*ēthos*), as the word itself indicates, is developed from habit (*ethos*); and anything is habituated which, as a result of guidance (*agoge*) which is not innate, through being changed a certain way repeatedly, is eventually capable of acing in that way (tr. Woods, II.3, 1220a39-b2).

Just as an expert in some craft instructs an apprentice, a guide (*agoge*) in moral education, such as a parent, teacher, or fellow citizen, can help a child in her development of good habits by encouraging her through praise, pointing out what is good about certain actions, as well as correct her when she errs through verbal instruction, blame, or punishment. These all involve some sort of cognitive engagement in the process, as Frede points out (2013, pp. 23-27, 31).[31]

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[29] See Kristjánsson (2014a, pp. 161-162) for discussion of this worry in Annas (2011).

[30] See Russell (2015) on the similarly between virtue and skill, especially in the development of both.

[31] In keeping with the skill analogy to virtue, another relevant passage concerning the learning process is at *Metaphysics* IX.8, where Aristotle claims that the learner has some of the knowledge constitutive of the craft knowledge.

> But since, of that which in general is changing, some part must have changed (this will be clear in the case of change) so, equally, the one who is learning must, it would seem, possess some part of the knowledge he is learning (tr. Sherman, 1049b28-1050a2).

In early stages of moral habituation, the child has not yet acquired the "that," but before full virtue, there must be a time where she acquires part of that knowledge, indicating that moral education involves some intellectual training.

Having good friends is also a matter of good fortune that can aid in a person's moral development. Vakirtzis argues that friendship between those of unequal moral quality can be beneficial to the person whose virtue is of a lesser degree by helping her become better. This can occur because the more virtuous friend acts as a moral exemplar to the friend and also because the more virtuous friend can offer helpful criticism or advice (Vakirtzis, 2013).

Not only will a child require good examples, but Aristotle claims she should be protected from bad company or influences – such as the company of bad people, bad stories, bad art, and the use of foul language (*Politics*, VII.17, 1336b4, 13-14). For Aristotle, this includes limiting the time a child is in the company of slaves (VII.17, 1336a41) and making sure he has no exposure to comedies or iambus[32] until he is old enough[33] to be secure from harm to his character (VII.17, 1336b19-20). The city should also be organized in ways that promote good habits in the youth. So, Aristotle states that the statesman should organize temples and principal messes (shared meals) for officials near the young since being under the scrutiny of important people encourages shame (VII.12, 1331a38-40), which is appropriate to the young person learning to be good.[34] For Aristotle claims, "whatever we encounter first we like better. That is why everything bad and vulgar should be alien to the young, particularly if it involves vice or malice" (tr. Reeve, VII.17, 1336b30-33).

Aristotle's practical advice for moral education focuses heavily on the kinds of company to which a child is exposed, suggesting that the child's acquisition of the "that" involves the

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[32] Iambus is the name of a type of mocking song sung at some religious festivals (Reeve, 1998, p. 225, fn. 106).

[33] Aristotle likely thinks one will be safe from the harms of iambus and comedy when one is 21. For he claims that the stages of life are separated in years of 7 and so the stages of the child's learning are from seven to puberty and puberty to age 21 (*Politics*, VII.17, 1336b39-40).

[34] (*EN*, IV.9, 1128b15-22).

development of her moral perception, that is, of her ability to see situations that call for good

actions and to see the way a good trait functions in a person's character and behavior. For the

child is not simply mindlessly compelled to perform certain actions repeatedly, but to behold

good examples that will motivate her towards the good.[35] Aristotle claims that "[since] virtue is a

matter of enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way, it is clear that nothing is more important

than that one should learn to judge correctly and get into the habit of enjoying decent characters

and noble actions" (tr. Reeve, VIII.5, 1340a14-17). And so, the young are educated to judge

correctly by recognizing noble actions and being pleased by them.[36] These concrete remarks in

the *Politics* flesh out the process of early habituation that I outlined in chapter three, especially

the way in which a child is cognitively engaged.

One's upbringing, therefore, contributes significantly to one's moral awareness as it

involves the development of her moral perception under the guidance of an "expert." While I

have focused on early development of the child in this section, the following section will address

the impact of a person's circumstances on the further development and maintenance of her

character. We will then be in a position to understand the relationship between responsibility and

the fortune involved in one's early and later development, as well as that involved in the

maintenance of one's character.

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[35] The connection between being motivated towards the good and perceiving it as good might be explained by Burnyeat's claim that learning to take pleasure in performing good actions is the same as learning to do good actions for their own sake because it involves learning their intrinsic value. So, through habituation one learns the "that": he learns that a good thing is enjoyable and intrinsically good (1980, p.78).

[36] For more on education and the good, see Miller (2001) who brings together the discussion of locomotion in *De Anima* with Aristotle's ideal of moral education to explain the role of reason and appetite in action. He argues that moral education involves learning to distinguish the good from the apparent good so that the object that inspires movement in a person is the actual good.

III. Character Development and Maintenance and One's Circumstances

The need for a city is not limited to a child's need for public moral education, but continues to serve a purpose for adults who must continue in their good habits if they are to maintain their virtue. Thus, Aristotle claims in Book X of the *EN*,

> Presumably, however, it is not enough if they get the correct upbringing and attention; rather, they must continue the same practices and be habituated to them when they become men… As we have said, then, someone who is good must be finely brought up and habituated, and then must live in decent practices, doing base actions neither willingly nor unwillingly (*EN*, tr. Irwin, X.9, 1180a1-3, 15-17).

Having had a good upbringing and a good start to moral development, thus, does not guarantee one will become and remain good throughout one's life.[37] Aristotle emphasizes this point in his transition to the *Politics* as he prepares the potential legislators of his audience to learn the best way(s) to make laws that promote virtue and good living in their future citizens. While a Greek man's virtue is sufficient on account of nature (*EN*, X.9 1179b18-20; *Politics*, V.9 1309b21-33), it will be difficult to become fully virtuous unless he lives under a good constitution that will help him avoid corruption and realize his natural talents. Full realization may only occur under

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[37] While Aristotle claims that one's upbringing will make "all the difference" (*EN*, II.1, 11103b25), it does not follow that one's upbringing will completely determine the moral state one will have. Brickhouse, for one, argues that a good upbringing is necessary, but not sufficient for developing virtue. I, by contrast, understand Aristotle's claim that a good upbringing "makes all the difference" to mean that it will be very difficult, though not impossible, to become virtuous. In other words, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for virtue, although developing virtue for the ordinary person will be challenging without it. A person may, however, be blessed with a good nature (*eutuchia phusei*) that may help her overcome her poor circumstances, as Aristotle discusses at *Eudemian Ethics* VIII.2. One's upbringing, thus, makes all the difference insofar as it will be very difficult to develop virtue without it, but a good upbringing is not sufficient to form one's character into a fully habituated state (*hexis prohairetikē*). As I have shown in chapter three, it is the judging and choosing of actions aimed at one's final end that forms one's state, and this occurs after childhood. See Kristjánsson (2014b) who argues that treating a good upbringing as necessary is ingrained in Aristotle's theory of moral education, and that we might reconstruct Aristotle's view by considering how contemplation can undo a bad upbringing. Consider Aristotle's example of a man brought up in bad habits who can, with sufficient time, make slow progress towards virtue and eventually change completely (*Categories* 13a22-31).

the ideal constitution,[38] but under a secondary (monarchy or aristocracy) or tertiary (polity) constitution, citizens might realize virtue to the highest degree possible for them given their limited resources. In other words, the ordinary person may only achieve virtue incompletely (*Politics*, III.5, 1286a30-35), but this may be the best she can achieve given her limited genetic, temperamental, and social fortune. Thus, the polity does not aim at virtue that is unreachable for ordinary people or an education that relies on great natural gifts[39] that depend on good fortune (*Politics*, IV.11 1295a26-28).

While I have been gathering textual evidence from various places in the *Politics* and *EN*, I will now focus on two texts that I think best bring out how vulnerable Aristotle thinks the ordinary person's character is to her circumstances and that suggest that a person's moral awareness is affected by her circumstances. These two texts are *Rhetoric* II.15-17 and *Politics* IV.11. In the former set of chapters, Aristotle discusses the types of temperament (*ēthos*) that accompany good fortune (*tuchē*) such as good birth, wealth, and power. In the latter chapter, Aristotle talks about the *hoi mesoi*, the middle-class people who are best suited to rule in the polity because of their moderation.

1. ***Rhetoric*** **II.15-17 and** ***Politics*** **IV.11 on the importance of circumstances for development and moral awareness.** At *Rhetoric* II.15, we start off small. While this particular chapter does not say much about one's moral awareness, it does have some implications for responsibility. After mentioning the temperament (*ēthos*) of the well-born, Aristotle distinguishes

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[38] (Ober, 2015, p.240).

[39] The Greek male's nature is sufficient, but it does not exceed the ordinary (Kraut, 2002, p. 209). In fact, Aristotle thinks that having extraordinary good fortune can make people arrogant (*hyperēphanōteroi*) and thoughtless (*alogistoteroi*), though pious (*philotheoi*) (*Rhetoric*, II.17, 1391a35-b2). In the *Politics*, he states, "It is admitted that moderation and the mean are best, and therefore it will clearly be best to possess the gifts of fortune in moderation; for in that condition of life men are most ready to follow rational principle" (tr. Jowett, IV.11, 1295b2-6). See also *Politics*, V.8, 1308b12-13.

between *eugeneia* and *to gennaion*: being well-born and being noble, or true to one's good birth (1390b22-23). The former is a good caused by fortune (*tuchē*), but the latter implies some sort of action on the part of the lucky person such that she does not let her good nature degenerate. For Aristotle claims that the offspring of good families are not always good: the descendants of highly gifted families (*euphua genē*), such as those of Alcibiades and Dionysius, degenerated into maniacs, and those of stable families (*stasima*), such as those of Socrates, Cimon, or Pericles, became fools and dullards (II.15, 1390b27-30).

Aristotle thus recognizes that being blessed with good fortune at one's start is not sufficient to develop a good character. This coincides with his claims at *EN* X.9 that a person must continue doing good if she is to remain good. But, we might also infer that a person can be held responsible for degenerating from her good birth when she has had opportunity to become good. For Aristotle's distinction shows that it is not enough to be born well, something more must be added in order to develop well and become noble. Filling in the gaps here with Aristotle's account of moral development, the missing piece is habituation both at the start of one's development (*EN*, II.1-3) and through adulthood (*EN*, III.5, X.9). Those who fail can be blamed for having failed to exercise their capacity to develop virtue on the less stringent account of responsibility I constructed in chapter four, assuming their failure was not caused by some external force, such as living in corrupt conditions (*Politics*, III.16, 1287a31-32).

For the moment, I will jump to *Rhetoric* II.17 on power since the chapter on wealth is nicely connected to his discussion of the middle class (*hoi mesoi*) in *Politics* IV.11. Again, Aristotle does not say much about the effect of power on moral awareness, but we are still able to further recognize how his view appreciates the effects that a person's circumstances have on her ordinary character as well as how responsibility relates to it. For Aristotle describes the

temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) of those who have power in a positive way while noting that their good qualities are the result of their circumstances. For example, Aristotle claims that because of their ability to do great deeds, those who have power tend to be ambitious (*philotimoteroi*) and manly (*andrōdesteroi*) (II.17, 1391a22). Because they must always be watchful in looking out for their power, they become energetic (1391a25). Lastly, he claims that they are more dignified and less pompous because they are more conspicuous given their rank (1391a26-27). Thus, he says, they are moderate and have dignity (*semnotēs*), which he describes as a mean between arrogance and servility at *EE*, II.3, 1221a8, III.7,1233b34-38 and *MM*, I.28, 1192b30-38. The powerful person's dignified temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) is primarily caused by his being in the spotlight rather than a conscious effort, yet Aristotle's mention of his moderation and of a trait that hits the mean (dignity) suggests this person has virtue to some degree. For he has a positive trait and is simply missing practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), which would make his natural virtue full virtue.

I now turn to Aristotle's remarks on the effect that wealth has on a person's ordinary character in order to show how sensitive Aristotle is to the significant effect one's circumstances has on one's character. Here, he does speak explicitly to its effect on one's moral awareness. At *Rhetoric* II.16, Aristotle describes how the temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) of a person is affected by wealth, claiming that the wealthy are insolent (*hubristai*) and arrogant (*hyperēphanoi*) because they think they possess all good things, mistakenly taking money as the standard of measurement (1390b32-34). They are luxurious and ill-mannered because they are so taken by wealth they believe all others wish to emulate them (1391a2-7). Thus, being wealthy can severely impede upon a person's character by affecting her standard of value and consequently causing her to develop poor qualities. Aristotle further notes that the temperament of the newly

rich is affected in a different way than those who come from old money because the former have

not been educated in wealth and thus their vices (*ta kaka*) are more numerous and present to a

larger degree (1391a14-17). Aristotle lastly attributes their wrongdoings to a mix of insolence

(*hubris*) and incontinence (*akrasia*) (1391a18-19).

Unlike his discussions of good birth and power, Aristotle's discussion of wealth mentions

the effect that money has on one's ability to reason or understand. He claims that the wealthy

become insolent and arrogant because "their possession of money affects their understanding...

wealth becomes a sort of standard of value for everything else" (tr. Roberts, II.16, 1390b33-34).

Similarly, in his discussion of the middle class (*hoi mesoi*) in the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that

those in the middle class are better able to listen to reason (IV.11, 1295b6). More than good birth

and power, how much money a person has seems to affect her moral awareness insofar as it sets

the wrong standard to judge value. Aristotle's explicitly stating that money has this effect, but

not mentioning this connection with respect to good birth and power[40] is perhaps accidental. He

observes in the *EN* that the common beliefs (*endoxa*) about happiness, and thus the standards by

which to judge value, are that it is pleasure, wealth, or honor (I.4, 1095a23). That he does not

mention power or good birth may simply be the result of the common beliefs concerning

happiness; it does not mean that a person who pursues the expansion of her power over all else or

who thinks a good life is primarily constituted by having come from a good family is not

similarly affected in her moral awareness. Wealth may also simply have a larger or more

conspicuous effect, especially in the context on political justice where the predominating

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[40] At the very least, power and good birth (or being born to a notable family, not necessarily one of virtue) may not affect moral judgment to the same degree. For example, the well-born person's disdain for others implies a standard of judgment based in the proximity (or lack thereof) of the cause of the good qualities with which she was born – i.e., how far back her family line goes (*Rhetoric*, II.15, 1390b21-22). Thus, the effect on judgment may be limited to praising a person's character rather than extending to other actions.

constitutions are democratic and oligarchic: based on the poor and the wealthy.[41] If this is so – or

at least plausible enough – then we can apply what Aristotle says about the relation between

wealth (or lack thereof) and understanding to other circumstances in which a person's

development is influenced by various goods of fortune. For he does explicitly mention beauty

and strength as additional goods of fortunes that can affect a person's development and ability to

follow reason at *Politics* IV.11, 1295b2-6. The same can also be said about misfortune. For

Aristotle concludes his discussion of the temperaments (*ēthē*) that accompany good fortune by

stating that one can infer the opposite traits in those who are poor, unfortunate, or powerless

(II.17, 1391b6-7), and he states in the *Politics* that both excessively good or bad fortune will

make a person unable to follow reason (IV.11, 1295b6-8). Since he says more about the poor in

the *Politics* chapter that I will discuss next, I will focus on that source of misfortune in my

discussion of that chapter.

Aristotle concludes his chapters on the temperaments (*ēthē*) that accompany the goods of

fortune by stating that a person who is excessively blessed with good fortune will tend to become

arrogant (*hyperphanōteroi*) and thoughtless (*alogistoteroi*), though pious (*philotheoi*) (*Rhetoric*,

II.17, 1391a35-b2). So, we might consider how a moderate amount of good fortune (or simply,

neutral circumstances) might affect a person's character and moral awareness. Aristotle argues

that having moderate good fortune is best when he discusses the middle class at *Politics* IV.11.

The passage is worth quoting in full.

> Since it is agreed that what is moderate and in a mean is best, it is evident that possessing
> a middle amount of the goods of luck is also best. For it most readily obeys reason,
> whereas whatever is exceedingly beautiful, strong, well-born, or wealthy, or conversely
> whatever is exceedingly poor, weak, or lacking in honor, has a hard time obeying reason.
> For the former sort tend more toward arrogance (*hubris*) and major vice, whereas the

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[41] Aristotle claims that the pursuit of wealth and honor and avoidance of their opposites are the major sources of
conflict (*Politics*, V.2, 1302a32). Thus, his focus on wealth may also be because of its significant contribution to
conflict in a political community.

latter tend too much toward malice (*kakourgia*) and petty vice; and wrongdoing is caused in the one case by arrogance and in the other by malice. Besides, the middles classes are least inclined either to avoid ruling or to pursue it, both of which are harmful to city-states (tr. Reeve, IV.11, 1295b2-12).

Aristotle argues that striking the mean is best since those who err in either extreme are worse off; they tend to develop bad traits. When it comes to the goods caused by fortune, those with too much become arrogant, while those with too little become petty and malicious. Aristotle attributes the better qualities of the middle class – qualities that are in the mean as opposed to being excessive or deficient – to their possession of a moderate amount of goods of fortune.

While I have been arguing that the account of virtue and character in the *EN* assumes one has been met with good character luck with respect to one's social and genetic inheritances and one's natural temperaments, here this is further elaborated upon: one's fortune must not be excessive if it is to be most conducive to developing virtue.[42] As I have mentioned in my discussion of the wealthy at *Rhetoric* II.16, Aristotle also claims here that having a moderate amount of goods of fortune makes it easier to follow reason. Thus, one's moral awareness can be affected by her circumstances insofar as she will be more or less able to listen to reason depending on her fortune.

Aristotle further describes the problems with having too many or too few goods of fortune. Those with too much of the goods of fortune are unable to be ruled and only know how to rule as masters do (IV.11, 1295b16, 20). Those with too few of the goods of fortune are too humble to rule and only know how to be ruled as slaves (IV.11, 1295b18-19). Thus, a city-state composed of many rich or poor will consist of slaves who are envious or masters who are

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[42] One might argue that the ideal constitution relies on an excessive amount of good fortune, but this would be a mistake. For while it does require a lot of good fortune, this fortune is in the form of the coming together of several goods such as good citizens, a good location, sufficient resources, etc. None of these goods are needed in excessive amounts. This is different from, say, being born into excessive wealth or with extraordinary beauty.

arrogant (IV.11, 1295b21-22), and will not resemble a political community since this involves

civic friendship that cannot be formed between envious or arrogant citizens (IV.11, 1295b22-24).

Unlike the excessively rich or poor, those of the middle class are neither envious nor inspire

envy in others, which allows them to "live out their lives free from danger" (IV.12, 1296b33).

Thus, those in the middle class seem to be best suited for habituating virtue since Aristotle says

habituation is best done gradually (*Politics*, VII.17, 1336a18) and living free from danger can

contribute to a person's ability to gradually develop virtue. The rich and the poor in Aristotle's

analysis are each other's targets, making it difficult for each to live free from the worries of

being ruled unjustly by the other.

We can apply this insight to other virtues as well: being excessively wealthy will make it

difficult to develop temperance when a young person gets accustomed to being able to

immediately satisfy his appetites on a grand scale. Generosity for Aristotle concerns matters of

the giving and taking of wealth, and more in the giving (*EN*, IV.1, 1119b25). A person with

excessive wealth will find it difficult to give the right amount to others since they judge goodness

by money and aim not at virtue, but at acquiring wealth.[43] The poor may also desire the taking of

wealth too much in comparison to giving. Thus, by virtue of their moderate circumstances, the

middle class avoids the vices of the rich and poor and can enjoy a moderate level of virtue that

allows them to live decent lives. Unlike the rich and poor, they can listen to reason, which

determines what is virtuous, like those who have had a good upbringing and can listen to

arguments concerning the good (*EN*, X.9, 1179b23, 32). Their virtue is at this point only of the

natural sort; they have not developed practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), but are prepared to, should

they have access to a good public education that can perfect what they have begun to develop

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[43] Cf. *Rhetoric*, II.16, 1390b32-34.

due to their circumstances. Because of the goodness of the middle class, however limited, Aristotle thinks the polity is best since those with a moderate amount of property, that is, the military class, rule (*Politics*, IV.11, 1295b40).[44] He claims the further evidence for this is that the best legislators, such as Solon, Lycurgus, and Charondas, owned a moderate amount of property (IV.11, 1296a18-19).

In sum, the large role that circumstances play in the development and maintenance of an adult's character is evident in Aristotle's descriptions of those who are affected by good, bad, or moderate fortune. The upshot is that a person's character is not only heavily influenced by her upbringing, but her circumstances continue to play a role in shaping her character throughout her life. These circumstances are not limited to those that can corrupt an otherwise good character, such as that mentioned at *EN*, I.10, 1101a7-8 or *Politics*, III.16, 1287a31-32.[45] While Aristotle

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[44] Aristotle distinguishes constitutions on the basis of the organization of offices, in particular which element rules over the others (III.6, 1278b8-9). He claims that a polity is essentially a constitution that is ruled by the many for the sake of the common good (III.7, 1279a36-37). Here, he claims the polity is ruled by the hoplite class that pools together their military virtue to rule. These men also tend to own a moderate amount of property and so they might be the middle class. They may have other virtues to some degree, but it seems what primarily marks them as moderately virtuous is that they have military virtue, which, unlike full virtue, can be found in many people (III.7, 1279a38-1279b3). See Kraut who argues that military virtue is a lesser form of civic virtue (2002, pp. (12.3). See Bobonich (2015) for discussion of Aristotle's claim that the incomplete virtues of many is superior to the few virtuous at *Politics* III.11. However, in his discussion of the polity at *Politics* IV.9, Aristotle says that it is a mix of democratic and oligarchic laws and principles, suggesting that in a polity, the rule would be shared by the rich and poor – he does not mention a middle class here. What is further puzzling is that nowhere in his discussion of the middle constitution in *Politics* IV.11-12 does he mention "polity," suggesting to some that the mixed or middle constitution is distinct, not to be identified with the polity. I think there is still good reason to think the mixed or middle constitution is a polity. For, after introducing this polity, Aristotle calls it a mixed constitution (IV.8, 1294a22-23), and enumerates three ways in which we might mix a constitution. First, one might use laws from both regimes, such as fining the rich for missing jury service and paying the poor for serving. Second, one might use a middle law, such as striking a mean between high and low property qualifications (IV.9, 1294a36-b6). Third, one might use elements of each, such as choosing those who will serve in office through voting (like an oligarchy) and requiring no property qualification for office holding (like a democracy) (IV.9, 1294b6-13). While one might use all three of these principles within one constitution by creating legislation and organizing politics offices in all of the ways mentioned, we might also distinguish between species of polities on the basis of which principle explains the mixture. Some polities may be governed by both rich and poor according to the first principle of the mixture, others by the middle class, according to the second principle. Of the different polities, Aristotle clearly states that the one organized on the basis of the second principle – striking a mean between oligarchic and democratic principles – is the best because it is most stable (IV.11, 1296a7).

For discussion on the mixed or middle constitution, see Balot (2015) who argues that the constitution described as middle in book IV.11-12 is indeed the polity. See Garver (2011, pp.115-122) who argues they are different.

[45] See also Nussbaum (2001, pp. 337-339) who argues that one can lose virtue in corrupting circumstances.

acknowledges that a good person might fall from grace under extreme circumstances, a person's character is also affected to a large extent by her ordinary circumstances; she will develop a certain kind of character in light of her circumstances. For example, he claims that a person will likely become arrogant if wealthy (*Rhetoric* II.16, 1390b32; *Politics* IV.11, 1295b10), moderately virtuous if part of the middle class (*Politics*, IV.11, 1295b30-32), malicious if poor (IV.11, 1295b10), slavish if severely poor (IV.11, 1295b18-22)[46], and tyrannical if poor to a lesser degree (IV.4, 1292a4-38; IV.6 1292b41-1293a10). In other words, the various degrees of wealth will correspond to certain qualities of character, good or bad, though these virtues or vices are only moderate since they do not develop through conscious choice but as a result of one's circumstances. And so, we can conclude that Aristotle's understanding of character and character development does not suppose independence from one's circumstances; a person can be virtuous (to a lesser, but still praiseworthy and desirable, degree) and live a good life while still falling short of the ideal.

Not only do circumstances play a large role in the maintenance of character, but we have also seen how a person's moral awareness can be influenced by her circumstances such as economic status. For Aristotle's discussion of the various temperaments (*phusikai hexeis*) that accompany fortune include mention of the effect of good fortune on one's awareness that is further supported by his claim in the *Politics* that those in the middle class are better able to listen to reason. We might further ask how fortune affects awareness in other ways. Some suggestions that may have grounding in the current empirical literature are that a person's awareness might be affected by causing her to desire something more than she ought, making her ignore important moral matters or find it difficult to reason when in emotionally taxing or non-

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[46] Aristotle claims that the severely poor will be too humble and envious, like slaves.

ideal situations where her cognitive resources are insufficient to address a moral problem.[47]

Alternately, a person's excessive appetite might get in the way her reasoning, as it happens in the case of the incontinent person. Briefly put, we have been able to establish that a person's awareness can be impeded upon by her circumstances in Aristotle's view. This has implications for an account of responsibility, to which I now turn.

IV. Responsibility and One's Upbringing

In chapter four, I developed an account of responsibility based on Aristotle's normative claims about the temperaments (*phusikai hexeis*) of ordinary people in his *Rhetoric*. While the focus was on natural dispositions with which we are either born or that develop without conscious effort – generally these latter types include dispositions caused by physical changes, such as a weakened appetite – here we can extend the results to the effects of one's upbringing on one's character and responsibility. Like one's natural temperament (*phusikai hexeis*), one's upbringing may result in a fragmented and changeable character. This is why Aristotle devotes most of his discussion of the ideal constitution to moral education; without a good education, one will most likely not develop full virtue.[48] Aristotle mentions the changeable character of ordinary people throughout the *EN*,[49] and claims that, unlike the virtuous person's character, it is not stable since it can change with one's circumstances (*EN*, I.10, 1100b35-1101a6). In the *Politics*' discussion of the middle class, we see a concrete instance of the ordinary person's character; the

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[47] This seems to be at work in many of the situationist experiments. For example, a person's anxious mood affects her helpful behavior. I discuss these experiments in chapter six. The emphasis that some philosophers and psychologists give to psychologically salient situations over nominal situations is a possible way to account for the *how* one's circumstances affect her reasoning and subsequent behavior. Simply put, a person's psychological traits largely affect which features of the situation are salient to her.

[48] Unless, perhaps, she has been blessed with a good nature that allows her to overcome her poor upbringing. Cf. *EE*, VIII.2.

[49] Aristotle often contrasts the ordinary person's character with that of the fully virtuous person in his discussion of friendship. Cf. *EN*, 1156a20, 1156b13, 1156b19, 1157a14, 1158b5, 1158b10, 1159b5-10, 1164a12-13.

moderate virtue a middle-class person has is heavily determined by her circumstances and thus will be more vulnerable to change in her fortune than the character of the fully virtuous. In book VII of the *EN*, Aristotle talks about the "soft" person who is vulnerable to intimidation and manipulation (*EN*, VII.7, 1150b1ff).[50]

Between one's natural dispositions and imperfect upbringing, one develops the kind of character described in chapter four – one that spans both a rational capacity and a *hexis*, having elements of both, *viz.* a temperament (*phusikai hexeis*). We have already discussed the difficulty with assigning responsibility on the basis of one's temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) on account of its lack of stability and its being largely outside of one's control. Yet, considering that an ordinary person's character (*phusikai hexeis*) is in some ways a capacity helps us to broaden Aristotle's account of virtue and character and speak to those who have not (yet) developed full virtue or vice. For if we only have an ideal, we can only make judgments concerning how far we fall short from the ideal – our judgments only address the goodness or badness of a person's character. But, if we also consider one's capacity to develop virtue, we can address one's responsibility and make further distinctions between the person who has had a morally difficult or inadequate upbringing and develops bad traits and a person with the same traits who had a good nature and good upbringing and thus could have easily become virtuous. While both might have the same bad traits, the latter has had a greater capacity to form virtue and thus is more responsible for her bad traits than the former.

The fragmented character of the ordinary person is thus a reflection of the combination of her natural dispositions and upbringing, two of the major sources of character luck. We have now added further detail to the less stringent account of responsibility in Aristotle by considering

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[50] See Kristjánsson (2008) who discusses the soft person in relation to situationism.

how one's upbringing and circumstances affect one's moral awareness. In chapter two of this dissertation, I considered the traditional understanding of responsibility in contemporary ethics to include two criteria: control and awareness. On the one hand, a person is held responsible to the extent the action in question was under her control. On the other hand, a person must have also been aware of the significance or meaning of the action she performed. These criteria together resemble Aristotle's criteria for the voluntary: an action's being "up to us" and free from ignorance.[51] When it comes to one's character, however, these criteria can be difficult to apply. Given the growing empirical literature that challenges the amount of control and awareness we exercise, I argued in chapter two that we ought to use reasonable standards to responsibility. For our social and genetic inheritances and natural temperaments are not "up to us," but rather, largely outside of our control. Further, as Aristotle recognizes, our moral awareness is greatly affected by our circumstances.

Consider the objection he raises in his discussion of responsibility for character at *EN*, III.5: "But someone may say that everyone aims at the apparent good, and does not control how it appears, but, on the contrary, his character controls how the end appears to him" (1114b1-2). Given that Aristotle sees moral education as an education in values (*EN*, X.9, 1179b34-36; *Politics*, VIII.5, 1340a14-17), the character that a person develops as a result of her upbringing, however fragmented, controls what a person aims for in her actions. For example, if a child is brought up in an oligarchic community, she will tend to make choices that reflect her view that wealth is the highest good. So, she may only help in cases where there is a monetary reward involved or she may ignore features of a situation that do not speak to this value. In his response, Aristotle does not reject the claim that a person's character controls how the good appears. Nor

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[51] See chapter three for more on voluntary action in Aristotle.

does he claim that a person's character is totally under her control. Rather, he simply states that

"if each person is *in some way* responsible for his own state [of character], he is also himself *in some way* responsible for how [the end] appears" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, III.5, 1114b3-4, emphasis mine).

In other words, Aristotle's view that we are in control of actions stemming from our characters

because we are in control of our characters does not assume a high standard of control. He claims

rather that we are merely co-causes (*sunaitioi*) of our characters (*EN*, III.5, 1114b23).[52]

Further, the textual evidence I have presented from the *Politics* in this chapter indicates

that the level of awareness, in its dependence on one's upbringing and continued development

through adulthood, is not unreasonably high either. For while acting free from ignorance for

Aristotle requires that one knows "who is doing it; what he is doing; about what or to what he is

doing it; sometimes also what he is doing it with – with what instrument, for example; for what

result, for example, safety; in what way, for example, gently or hard" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, III.1,

1111a4-7), one's knowledge of the values that guide one's deliberation are greatly influenced by

one's circumstances and upbringing. Thus, a person who pursues her self-interest over

everything else may have freely chosen to do so by rejecting the good values of her society. By

contrast, she may only have acquired this goal as the result of an upbringing that values

individualism excessively. Her capacity to understand the rightful place self-interest should take

in relation to other goods is less than what it would had she had a better upbringing. In the

Politics, Aristotle emphasizes this point when he holds the legislator, not the individual,

responsible for acquiring the wrong values. He claims that good cities should not aim only at

inculcating some virtues at the expense of others, such as those that are more conducive to

acquiring wealth or honor over those that enable unqualifiedly noble actions such as

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[52] See Meyer (1993, ch. 5) who argues for such a view of mitigated responsibility in *EN* III.5.

contemplation (*theoria*). Rather, a city should learn how to enjoy times of leisure such that they pursue higher ends than honor from winning wars (*Politics*, VII.14, 1333b1-2, 9-10). He argues that in cases where citizens value the wrong ends, honors of war rather than a life of virtuous activity, it is the legislator, not the citizens, who is responsible for having poorly educated them (VII.14, 1334a10).

In short, the account of responsibility is less stringent because the conditions for control and awareness also factor in one's capacity to exercise control or have moral awareness given her social and genetic inheritances and natural temperaments. The result as that more people are held responsible.

V. Conclusion

Thus, the less stringent account of responsibility in Aristotle still uses two criteria of control and awareness to determine praise or blame, while recognizing that this account need not be stringent. If we consider not only the good- or badness of one's character when we assign responsibility, but one's capacity to form a good character, we can recognize the limited amount of control and awareness one exercises without using these as reasons to completely undermine a person's responsibility for her character and the actions that follow from it. This account applies to all people, not only the ordinary person, but since it considers one's capacity for virtue, it mitigates responsibility for the ordinary person when she has not been met with good character luck. The emphasis on what is "up to us" rather than factors that mitigate responsibility that we find in the *EN* is there simply because the audience for that text consists of those who have the greatest capacity for virtue. The upshot is that we might not always or usually be full responsible, but if we recognize the large role our upbringings and moral education play in our character development, we can emphasize the need to build better communities that are more conducive to

the development and maintenance of virtue. Making the necessary provisions to keep our behavior and characters in check is not contrary to an Aristotelian account of virtue and character, but is consistent with his view that a person's character is dependent on her circumstances.

Before moving on to chapter six where I discuss how Aristotle's view of the character of the ordinary person and the account of responsibly I have constructed relates to recent work in social psychology, I shall summarize briefly the main insights I have gathered from his *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. In chapter four on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, I focused on the temperaments that accompany age as a way to understand how our natural dispositions (*phusikai hexeis*) affect our character and responsibility. While everyone is born with his or her own inclinations towards virtue or vice, and with age, people may unwittingly develop natural virtue or vice, some can train those dispositions so that they strike the mean and contribute to a virtuous state – a state formed through one's repeated choosing of the good and development of practical wisdom, *viz.* a *hexis prohairetikē*. Others allow their natural dispositions to develop on their own and develop states corresponding to the kind of behavior in which they habitually engage, but do not consciously choose to become a virtuous or vicious person. The result is a person whose temperament is comprised of affective inclinations and whose thinking and behavior is easily manipulated by circumstances. The orator can, for instance, easily persuade his audience by putting them in a good mood. Any traits that resemble virtues or vices are merely natural virtues and vices – states that are explained by the affective units that make up a full virtue or vice, but are not chosen for themselves. The ordinary person is such a person who has either not yet fully developed her character or has failed to do so.

The ordinary person of the *Politics* also falls short of full virtue or vice. The middle class, for instance, only has moderate virtue, which is like natural virtue in that it is unreflectively developed, but is different insofar as it is caused not by the inclinations with which one is born or which develop on their own as one ages, but rather, by the effects that one's circumstances have on instilling good habits in a person and facilitating her ability to listen to reason.[53] What the *Politics* further shows is the large role that one's circumstances play in developing and maintaining virtue. For the virtues of the middle class and the vices of the rich and poor are the result of their good, bad, or moderate fortune when it comes to wealth. If circumstances should change for any member of these groups, a change in her state (*hexis*) would follow. It is not just the ordinary person whose character (*hexis*) is dependent on her circumstances for its development and maintenance. Even the fully virtuous will require intense moral education and will need to live under laws that compel or deter good or bad behavior as an adult. Thus, Aristotle's view of the fully virtuous person still recognizes significant limits to her control over becoming and remaining good.

These insights into the ordinary person and the limits to the fully virtuous person acknowledge the large extent to which one's character is affected by moral luck and raises questions concerning responsibility for character and the actions that follow from it. Extending the conversation beyond what Aristotle says in the *EN* to include the ordinary person of the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* allows us to construct a less stringent theory of responsibility that acknowledges a person's capacity for virtue. For there is an important distinction between having an excellent character and being responsible for that character: the former might simply be a matter of luck while the latter necessarily involves one's conscious choices and capacity for

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[53] Natural virtue, too, can affect one's ability to listen to reason. For Aristotle claims of the person in his prime that he is able to judge in accordance with the truth (*kata to alēthes krinontes*) (*Rhetoric*, II.14, 1390a34).

virtue. At *EN* III.5, Aristotle acknowledges this when he claims we are only co-responsible (*sunaitioi*) for our characters. In the *EN*, Aristotle assumes his audience has a great capacity for virtue since they are free Greek men – they have been socially, genetically, and temperamentally blessed. Thus, his claim that virtue and vice are "up to us" at *EN* III.5 makes sense in the context of those who have such a capacity for virtue, but failed to develop it. By contrast, the ordinary person's capacity for virtue may be limited if she does not have natural temperaments conducive to forming virtue or she has developed under poor circumstances. She may develop a vicious character under her poor conditions, but not be fully responsible for it given her bad luck. Bringing out this feature of Aristotle's account of responsibility not only provides a deeper understanding of his view, but demonstrates how his view is not so far removed from our own egalitarian beliefs about fairness and the importance of opportunity.

The account of the character of the ordinary person I have developed in chapters four and five further speaks to the contemporary position in social psychology called situationism – the view that it is one's circumstances that are more explanatory of behavior than character. I dedicate the following chapter to showing how Aristotle's view both anticipates and is consistent with this view.

CHAPTER SIX

ARISTOTLE AND MORAL PSYCHOLOGY:

THE EMPIRICAL ADEQUACY OF CHARACTER

Drawing on the results from studies in recent social psychology, philosophers and psychologists alike have cast significant doubt on the existence of character, arguing that there is little or no empirical evidence that people have robust traits that cause their behavior to be cross-situationally consistent. Instead, situationists argue that minor situational factors, like finding a dime in a phone booth, affect behavior more predictably.[1] The empirical literature dates back to Hartshorne and May's 1928 study of honesty in school-aged children.[2] In various experiments, they found that students were not uniformly honest in a range of circumstances, suggesting the lack of any cross-situationally stable trait. While some might point out that the lack of character robust traits in young children says nothing about their presence in adults, there have been many studies since then that have shown the same results in adults.

Rather than take these as indication that Aristotle's notion of character is either non-existent or too fragmented to sustain virtue, I explain how his broader account of character sheds light on the development of the ordinary person. The result is a character that is fragmented: it contains a mix of conscious and unconscious dispositions and is not unified by a single

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[1] For the main views in support of situationism, see Harman (1999, 2000, 2003, 2009), Merritt (2000 & 2010), Upton (2009b), and Doris (2002 & 2015). For responses to these accounts, see Kupperman (1991, 2001, 2009), Swanton (2003), Kamtekar (2004), Webber (2006), Annas (2005), Adams (2006), and Athanassoulis (2000). For an overview of the initial waves of the debate see Upton (2009a). In what follows, I speak to a more recent shift.

[2] (Hartshorne and May, 1928)

conception of the good. Because the character of the ordinary person is fragmented, her behavior

will be heavily influenced by situational cues rather than robust traits, i.e., traits that are

consistently activated in trait-relevant situations regardless of situational pressures. I will show

how Aristotle's view is not only consistent with the available evidence of social psychology. To

do this, I draw connections between the work I have done in chapters four and five on the

character of the ordinary person in Aristotle and recent empirical work on character.

The situationist often takes the studies (that I discuss below) to indicate that the

psychology upon which Aristotle's view is built is outdated, and so his theory rests on false

assumptions about what is possible for, as Owen Flanagan puts it, "creatures like us."[3] Much of

the disagreement rests on the idea that Aristotelian virtues are global traits: they are traits of

character that are reliably expressed in trait-relevant actions in a range of diverse, trait-relevant

situations, and they are stable over time. So an honest person will behave honestly when it comes

to situations where she has opportunity to lie and in situations where she has opportunity to steal.

She will also refrain from lying or stealing in future situations where she has opportunity to lie or

steal. The psychological evidence, however, indicates that while a person might engage in trait-

relevant behavior in one kind of situation, she will often fail to behave in the trait-relevant way in

another. For example, in the honesty studies[4], the correlation between different kinds of

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[3] (Flanagan, 1991, p. 32). In his book, Flanagan challenges Aristotelian ethics since he claims that the idea of full virtue is one we don't understand; we do not have a full list of the "correct" virtues and even if we came up with such a list it would be bizarre to think that a single person could possess them all (p. 10). Thus, Flanagan rejects the unity of the virtues thesis often attributed to Aristotle, an idea challenged by a closer examination of his texts which reveals not only degrees of virtues, but lack of unity.

[4] "Honesty" is defined quite broadly by Hartshorne and May. Kamtekar criticizes the use of this study as evidence of local, rather than broad, traits since they stick together very different dispositions, like lying, cheating, and stealing, that are not obviously connected (2004, pp. 468-470). Further, using a study that was done on schoolchildren does not provide conclusive proof that people have local rather than broad traits since we ought to expect the character of a child is not yet fully formed and thus may be fragmented in a way that an adult's is not. In response, I follow Doris

dishonest behavior, like cheating on a test and lying about having cheated, was significantly

lower than the correlation within one of the kinds of dishonest behavior, like cheating on a test.[5]

There was an even higher correlation within the domain of cheating in a particular way, such as

when it came to copying answers from an answer key compared to working on a test after time

was called.[6] Further, studies indicate that behavior is more often caused by minor situational

factors rather than a person's traits. So, a person will be helpful when she is in a good mood, but

not otherwise.[7] In sum, traits seem to lack stability over time and robustness across situations, a

conclusion that seems inconsistent with the traditional understanding of Aristotelian virtue and

character.

I will show that the inconsistencies between the available psychological evidence and

Aristotle's view are only apparent. Given that the *EN* presents an account of character and moral

development based upon ideal conditions being met, it is not surprising that almost no one lives

up to the virtuous person described there.[8] Aristotle, especially in some of his lesser known texts

where he discusses the ordinary person, such as the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, accounts for how we

become people with fragmented characters, and so, how we might modify our environments to

be more conducive to both developing and maintaining virtue. These insights find concrete

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who says that while this study does not provide evidence for the fragmented character of an adult, it is useful as an interpretative perspective (2002, p. 63).

[5] The correlation for behaviors within a specific type of (dis)honest behavior was .721, while it was only .227 across types of (dis)honest behavior (Hartshorne and May, 1928, pp. 122-125).

[6] (*Ibid*., pp. 382-383)

[7] For work on the connection between good mood and helping behavior, see Isen and Levin (1972). While these studies focus on those good moods that are produced by one's circumstances, I consider the case of a person who has the natural disposition to be a good mood. This person's behavior will be much more reliable since her good mood is more stable than a person who is put in a good mood on account of circumstances outside of her control.

[8] Several virtue ethicists have pursued this line of argument in their responses to situationism. See Badhwar (2009) or Kupperman (2009) for a couple examples.

expression in the available psychological data. Even more, despite the theory's setting a high

standard, there is still evidence that the virtuous traits presented in the *EN* are neither global[9] nor

situationally independent in the way critics often suppose. Thus, Aristotle's view of character

can accommodate the empirical work in both its explanation of the ordinary person and its

realistic conception of virtue as a narrow and socially dependent trait.[10]

Some might object that showing consistency between Aristotle's theory and the current

psychological data is not enough to convince anyone that Aristotle presents a viable ethic. While

I do not propose a full defense of virtue ethics as the best approach to ethics, I do think that

showing there is consistency is an important step in that direction. Because of the tension

between the global traits of character in Aristotle's ethics and the psychological evidence against

the existence of such traits, many philosophers have argued that Aristotelian ethics is

inconsistent with the available empirical data and should be abandoned. Gilbert Harman, for one,

argues that the existence of character is highly dubitable and so leaves no room for Aristotelian

ethics since no one could reasonably hope to acquire the virtues as he defines them (1999, 2000,

2003, and 2009). He claims, "Character based virtue ethics may offer a reasonable account of

ordinary moral views. But to that extent, these ordinary views rest on error" (1999, p. 327). John

Doris claims, "Aristotelian approaches to ethics, in so far as they presuppose certain distinctive

commitments in descriptive psychology, may be subject to damaging empirical criticisms"

(1998, p. 505). He later argues that Aristotelian virtues are robust traits, but that robust traits are

empirically inadequate since very few people have them (2002, pp. 18-23). Maria Merritt argues

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[9] See section I.1 for discussion on global traits.

[10] For example, he Aristotle claims bravery in the proper sense (*kuriōs legoit'*) involves the right amount of fear and confidence in the face of death in war (*EN*, III.6, 1115a34-35). More on this later.

that the situationist challenge is a problem particularly for an Aristotelian version of virtue ethics, claiming, "if you accept [the situationist personality psychology] as a descriptive moral psychology while at the same time taking to heart the Aristotelean normative ideal of virtue, you will encounter serious psychological strains in your attempt to live the life of the Aristotelean virtuous person" (2000, p. 376). Christian Miller argues in his two books on moral psychology that while there may exist global traits of character, these traits are not virtues or vices (2013, esp. pp. 156-157, 190-198, and 2014a, esp. pp. 38-41, 194-195, 206-210).[11] If the reason to abandon an approach to ethics that focuses on the development of a virtuous character is that current psychological data is inconsistent with the psychology upon which such a theory is based, showing that there is consistency is important because it undermines this major objection to virtue ethics. So while more would need to be said to give an exhaustive defense of an Aristotelian conception of ethics, for now we can be satisfied having made significant progress in that direction.

I. The Studies and Their Interpretations

The following is a list of some of the prominent studies often cited by situationists as indication that the traditional notion of character as a robust and stable set of traits is empirically inadequate.

Ambient noise, good moods, and helping behavior. In various studies, minor situational factors that had positive effects on a person's mood were strongly correlated with helping behavior. In Mathews' and Cannon's lawnmower study, only 12.5% of subjects helped a man who dropped a stack of books in the high-noise condition, while 50% helped in the ambient-

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[11] Miller does acknowledge that virtue might exist, but that it is rare (2014c).

noise condition (1975, p. 575). In Levin and Isen's study on cookies and helping behavior, they found that 69% of participants who were given a cookie volunteered to help in a psychology experiment, while only 50% of those who didn't receive a cookie volunteered (1972, p. 386). In Isen and Levin's dime study, 14 out of 16 participants who received a dime from the phone booth helped a confederate who dropped a stack of papers, while 24 of 25 men and women who did not receive a dime from the phone booth did not (1972, p. 387).[12]

The Milgram Experiments. Most alarming of the experimental psychology literature findings is the well-replicated Milgram Experiments conducted in 1963 by Stanley Milgram. In these studies, the gentle urging of the experimenter was enough to cause most subjects to attempt to administer lethal levels of high-voltage shocks to a hidden, but audibly in pain, learner whenever he answered a question incorrectly.[13] Only 35% of Milgram participants in his obedience experiments refused to proceed to administer the deadly 450 volts to an out of sight, but audibly in pain learner (1974, pp.60-61).

Situations and Samaritans. Darley and Batson's 1973 study on situational factors and helping behavior showed that minor situational changes like being in a rush determined whether a seminarian stopped to help a woman in distress.[14] Of those seminarians who were in a rush, having been told they were late for the second part of the experiment, only 10% stopped to help the person in distress, while 63% who were not rushed offered assistance, and 45% who were

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[12] This study, though often cited, should be taken with a grain of salt as it has had replication issues. A similar study did not find a correlation between finding a dime and helping; 15 out of 35 participants in that study helped despite not finding a dime and only 6 of 15 who did find a dime helped (Blevins and Murphy, 1974).

[13] (Milgram, 1974, pp. 27-31).

[14] (Darley and Batson, 1973)

told they were on-time for the next part of the experiment offered help (Darley and Batson, 1973, p. 105).

Watching Eyes. Moral behavior has been shown to increase when a picture of eyes is present rather than a picture of flowers. Pictures of eyes have been correlated with: increased generosity in a game where players decide how much of their good fortune they'd share with other players,[15] increased donations to a communal pot in a public goods game,[16] increased donations to a communal pot used to replenish the coffee supply in a shared office,[17] and decreased litter in a self-service cafeteria.[18]

Group Effect. The results of group effect studies conducted by Latané and Nida show that when a higher the number of people are present, the chances of any individual helping are lower.[19]

There are two conclusions one might draw from these findings. One might say that hardly anyone has a virtue, let alone all of the virtues. This conclusion does not conflict with the claims of virtue ethicists since they all agree that virtue is indeed a rare achievement. Consider the following argument for the rarity thesis. In her response to situationism, Neera Badhwar points out the "forgotten minority"; there are some people in the studies whose behavior is not affected by morally irrelevant features of their environment such as ambient smells or noises or the voice

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[15] (Haley and Fessler, 2005)

[16] (Burnham and Hare, 2007)

[17] (Bateson et al, 2006)

[18] (Ernest-Jones et al, 2011)

[19] (Latané and Nida, 1981)

of an authority figure (2014, p. 41). While all of the numbers are very small, that some people were not affected proves that virtue is not psychologically impossible. It is just rare.[20]

While it is possible that this minority consists of people who have other unsavory traits like being too arrogant, say, to listen to an experimenter's request to continue with the experiment, this interpretation requires the same amount of speculation as attributing virtue (which includes virtuous motivations) to any or some of the minority group in these studies. At the end of the day, the experimental evidence does not test for how a person reasons or which considerations she takes into account when she acts: whether she is acting on pride, arrogance, sympathy, or by some other motivation. We are left to infer those reasons on the basis of how much we know about a particular person and the patterns of her behavior, information that is severely limited in these studies. Miller, for one, argues that we need longitudinal studies – studies conducted on the same people over time – to make these inferences about particular people (2014a, pp. 200, 202). Kristján Kristjánsson also suggests the need for longitudinal studies (2008, p. 76).

Still, we are not altogether without evidence that a person is not affected by moral reasons; the rushed seminarians who did not help appeared anxious after encountering the person in distress (Darley and Batson, 1973, p. 108). While appearing anxious is not conclusive proof for virtue – and in fact might indicate the person is "soft" rather than virtuous – it does more to indicate the cognitive and emotional content pertinent to the virtue in question. For Aristotle claims that a good person will feel pain when he does the wrong thing (*EN*, IV.1, 1121a1-2). There might still be a question about the usefulness of a theory of virtue that sets a standard

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[20] For a few examples of the "rarity thesis," i.e., the view that the studies do not provide evidence for virtue because it is rare, see Kupperman (2003), Annas (2011), and Miller (2014).

almost no one reaches. I will argue that the standard for virtue is not so high; the view that one

need situational support to maintain one's virtue is not contrary to Aristotle's view.

One might, by contrast, conclude that these studies show not only that most people are

not virtuous, but that it is not possible for any human to become virtuous given the limitations of

our psychology. On this view, the studies completely undermine character ethics by showing that

it is based upon an outdated and inaccurate psychology. The idea here is that virtue is not rare,

but impossible for humans. Of the situationists involved in the debate on character, Gilbert

Harman expresses the most skepticism about the existence of character (1999, 2000, 2002, and

2010). He argues that the appeal to character is the result of the fundamental attribution error

where a person wrongly attributes behavior to a robust character trait while ignoring the

situation(s) that gave rise to the behavior in question.[21] Early on in the situationist debate,

Harman claimed, "It is very hard to do studies that might indicate whether or not people differ in

character traits, but few studies that have been done do not support this idea. We must conclude

that, despite appearances, there is no empirical support for the existence of character traits"

(1999, p. 330). Harman argues that the sensible conclusion to draw from the empirical data,

however limited it might be, is that there is no evidence that people have character traits. While

his language early on in this debate is quite strong – he claims we *must* conclude there is no

empirical support – he later clarifies that he is not asserting there are no traits, but that we do not

have reason to believe that there are any:

> I do not think social psychology demonstrates there are no character traits, either as
> ordinarily conceived or as required for one or another version of virtue ethics. But I do
> think that results in social psychology undermine one's confidence that it is obvious there
> are such traits (2009, p. 241).

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[21] Confirmation bias explains why people are subject to making such errors; once a trait is assigned, anything that
supports its existence is taken as evidence, and anything that disconfirms its existence is ignored or downplayed.

Harman does not argue that studies in social psychology prove without any doubt that people have no character traits. In other words, he is not claiming that the empirical evidence does more than scientists, in general, can do, i.e. make reasonable inductions from controlled experiments. He instead argues that there is no evidence for the existence of traits other than that of the anecdotal type. If he is right, then ethicists ought to shift their focus from character, at least until there is more evidence to support their beliefs in it.

In the last few years, philosophers have come up with other views of character that they argue fit better with situationist findings than Harman's view.[22] While Harman concludes from the studies that there is no evidence (at least yet) to support our belief in character, others interpret the findings as indicating there are traits, but that they differ from traditional conceptions of character traits. Doris, for one, argues that we ought to abandon the conception of character traits as global; the evidence supports the existence of local traits instead. For example, someone who is honest when it comes to not cheating on a test, but not when it comes to lying is honest-while-taking-a-test, but not honest in general.[23] Christian Miller has also put forth an empirically grounded view of character. He calls his view a Mixed Trait Framework and claims ordinary people do not have any virtues or vices, even locally, but they do have mixed traits that are both global and stable when considered with respect to certain kinds of situations (i.e., psychologically salient rather than nominal ones; more on this in subsection two).[24] Both views

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[22] Since my main interest is on the Aristotelian conceptions of character and virtue that are primarily the targets of situationism, I do not consider other views of character, see for example Merritt (2000), whose views tend to focus on virtuous traits of action, rather than character, and thus are not of interest for my project on character luck. I also do not consider a Confucian account of character, which may bear much resemblance to the Aristotelian account. See Slingerland (2011) for a Confucian account.

[23] (Doris, 2002, 2015)

[24] (Miller, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). See also Doris on nominal versus psychological situations (2002, pp. 76-85) and his book review of Miller's 2013 and 2014 books (2015).

have their own merits even if they also fall into trouble. I will examine each in turn, drawing out what I take to be the insights from each. Then I bring my findings in the previous chapters to bear on these views, showing how Aristotle's view is empirically adequate. Much of this evidence is found outside of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in his *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, which focus on ordinary citizens. I highlight how Aristotle's focus on the development of character accounts for the sources of our fragmented characters, which provides a basis for an account of responsibility for character as well as an emphasis on the need to develop and act in environments conducive to virtue. These ideas find concrete expression in social psychology.

     1. Key concepts. Before I discuss Doris' and Miller's respective view, I first want to say some more about the important distinctions between nominal and psychologically salient situations and between global and local traits. Since these distinctions are at the heart of Doris' and Miller's disagreement, it is important to understand the relative significance of each. Briefly put, nominal situations are comprised of objective, third party observable features of a situation, while psychologically salient situations depend on the individual's construal of a situation. Global traits enjoy cross-situational consistency and stability among trait-relevant situations, while local traits have consistency and stability only with respect to certain, narrow types of nominal situations.

     A nominal situation defines a situation with respect to its objective features that can be observed by a third party, say an experimental psychologist. These features include the physical features of a situation such as the place, time, or event.[25] For example, in the Good Samaritan study, the situation is nominally defined as one calling for helping behavior because of the

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[25] See Miller (2014a, pp. 115-116) or Doris (2002, pp. 76-85) for more discussion on the distinction between nominal and psychologically salient situations.

visible person in distress, the low cost involved in helping that person, and the importance of the

distressed person's need outweighing the need to arrive on time to give a lecture. For each

participant, most parts of the nominal situation remained the same, but only minor, morally

irrelevant features were tweaked; different participants were in differing levels of time

constraints as they passed by the person in distress. By looking at the nominal features of the

situation, the results of this study support the situationist hypothesis that minor situational

differences play a larger role than character in determining behavior – being in a rush was highly

correlated with not helping, and not being in a rush correlated with helping. Other differences in

character and situation, such as whether religion was seen as a means to provide meaning in

one's life or whether it was seen as an end goal and whether a person had just heard a lecture on

the Good Samaritan or on possible jobs for seminarians, did not have as strong of correlations

with helping behavior.[26]

    For social-cognitive theorists and some philosophers, the psychologically salient features

of a situation are more important than the nominal features and are better explainers of

behavior.[27] A psychologically salient situation is comprised of "the features of the situation that

have significant meaning for an individual or type, and that are related to the experienced

psychological situation – the thoughts and affects and goals that become activated within the

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[26] (Darley and Batson, 1973)

[27] Miller is just one example of a philosopher who thinks psychological situations are more explanatory of people's traits and behavior than nominal situations. He argues that taking into account how a situation appears to a particular person is more significant and accounts for broad traits – a person will exhibit cross-situationally consistent behavior if we consider her emotional state or what is psychologically salient to her. For example, if two people are in the same garden, they occupy the same nominal situation. But, if one of these people has a fear of garden snakes, he will be in a different psychological situation. See also Snow (2010) and Sreenivasan (2002) who are that psychologically salient situations are more predictive and explanatory of behavior than nominal ones. This approach was inspired by Shoda, et al's work on developing the CAPS model of personality. See Shoda, Mischel, and Wright (1994) for discussion on this model.

personality system" (Mischel, 2004, p. 15). Thus, one looks not to generic features that can be observed by a third party, but considers the situation from the perspective of the agent – her thoughts, attitudes, goals, values, fears, etc. Focusing on psychologically salient features causes a person to make sense of an agent's behavior by appealing to the parts of her situation that will in particular stand out to her. So while a group of people might inhabit the same nominal situation – like witnessing a person in need of help – they may be in different psychologically salient situations – like being in an anxious mood or not.[28]

The distinction between nominal and psychological situations originates in Mischel and Shoda's CAPS model. One feature of this model is that situations have meanings for an individual that depend on a person's natural temperament or social learning history.[29] The psychological evidence in support of this distinction includes a 1994 study of 84 children over a six week period where their behavior varied in correlation to psychological variables arising from such situations as being teased by peers, having positive contact with peers, or being praised, punished, or warned by adults.[30] Rather than modifying features of the situations that have significance independently of a person's mood, this study attempted to alter the emotional states of the child and show that, when put in a certain emotional state, the child will be more or less likely to behave in certain ways.[31] The results indicated a higher than chance correlation

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[28] This does not exclude the possibility that nominal features of a situation may affect one's mood. In fact, Snow argues that people have traits that are consistent across objective situations because of a person's subjective construals of those situations (2010, p. 33).

[29] See Snow (2010, ch. 1) for more discussion on the CAPS model. For criticisms see Doris (2002, pp. 76-85) and Miller (2014a, ch.5).

[30] (Snow, 2010, pp. 21-25).

[31] To contrast to nominal situations, the children were also observed during woodworking sessions and cabin meetings (*Ibid.*, p. 21).

between behavioral profiles and children. For example, one child consistently responded to

negative interpersonal interactions with both peers and adults with verbally aggressive

behavior.[32]

Where there is lack of consistency when it comes to nominal situations, we might find

consistency if we consider how the individual's emotional state, such as feeling anxious,

regularly affects her helping behavior. Miller argues that focusing on psychologically salient

situations allows for cross-situationally consistency, and thus demonstrates the presence of

global traits. As I have outlined above, global traits are supposed to display both consistency

amongst diverse situations and stability within similar situations.[33] For example, a brave person

should display consistent bravery in both physical and moral situations and her trait is also

expected to stably produce brave behavior from one battle to the next. Miller's mixed traits are

global because they produce trait-relevant behavior across similar and diverse situations; a

person with a mixed aggression trait will behave aggressively whenever she is seeking revenge,

but not if she has reason to fear being held responsible for her aggression.

In contrast to global traits, local traits will only apply to narrowly defined situations. A

locally brave person will not necessarily be brave in every type of situation that calls for bravery.

She might be brave when it comes to physical situations demanding bravery, but not moral ones.

Further, she might only be brave when it comes to certain types of physical situations, like when

an attacker has a knife, but not others, like when he has a gun.

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[32] (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

[33] They are also thought to be evaluatively integrated with other, similar traits, but this feature is not as important for this chapter since Doris and Miller are not arguing for a unity of the virtues thesis. I myself consider this thesis to be an aspect of Aristotle's ideal theory that need not limit our attributions of virtue to those who have all of the virtues to every degree. In other words, when it comes to actual virtue, individuals may possess only one or a few of the virtues and may only possess them to some degree. See chapter four of this dissertation on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* for a detailed account of these traits.

2. Doris and local traits. Inspired by Owen Flanagan's 1991 book *Varieties of Moral Personalities* and the growing empirical data that has given rise to situationist concerns, Doris presents an account of behavior that takes into consideration empirical findings while still finding a place to talk about character. To do this, he attacks the thesis that people have global traits, which he defines as: 1) consistent in diverse situations that are trait-relevant; 2) stable in similar trait-relevant situations; and 3) evaluatively integrated so that the presence of one trait is likely to mean a person has another, similar trait (2002, p. 22). Since these three features of a trait conflict with the results of experimental psychology, Doris concludes that "globalist conceptions of personality are empirically inadequate" (p. 23).

While Doris concludes that traditional notions of character are empirically inadequate, he develops his own positive account of character traits that he believes reflects the empirical data better. He argues, "Systematic observation of behavior, rather than suggesting evaluatively integrated personality structures, suggests instead *fragmented* personality structures – evaluatively *dis*integrated associations of multiple local traits" (p. 25). According to Doris, character is not a set of robust and causally efficacious global traits, but a fragmented set of local traits. Studies show that the more similar a situation is to another, the more there is consistency in behavior, and the less similar a situation is, the less consistency there is (p. 64).[34] So while the standard view of a global trait like sociability holds that the sociable person will exhibit sociable behavior whenever there is opportunity, Doris' local traits account holds that a person will not always be sociable; she may be regularly and predictably sociable when it comes to a certain

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[34] For example, one form of cheating in the Hartshorne and May studies would correlate strongly with a similar type of cheating (like copying from an answer key), but not with a less similar type of cheating (like continuing to work after time is called on a speed test) (Hartshorne and May, 1928, pp. 382-383).

type of situation, such as when she is at office parties, but she will fail to be sociable in other situations. On Doris' view, she has office-party-sociability rather than the global trait "sociability."[35]

Local traits do seem better able to fit with the growing literature in experimental psychology since they account for both behavioral inconsistencies across situations and the common observations of friends, co-workers, family, etc. who exhibit some regularity in our interactions with them. Local traits do exhibit regularity with respect to their trait-relevant situations and so they do not make ordinary appeal to traits obsolete. For Doris, local traits do not exclude cases of local virtues or vices; someone might be courageous on the battlefield when it comes to facing certain dangers, while lacking courage in other physical or moral situations, like standing on the roof of a tall building or sticking up for a bullied friend.

Still, Doris admits his view lacks the explanatory power that character is supposed to have. By focusing on behavioral outcomes, his view looks hopelessly circular; a person's courage on the battlefield is explained by her battlefield-courage trait, while her battlefield-courage trait is explained by her regular courageous behavior on the battlefield. Doris argues that this is not a problem unique to his local traits account but a problem for any trait account (2002, p. 66). He briefly mentions appealing to the psychological context of the person, such as her goals, motives, attitudes, desires, etc., in order to have a more satisfying explanation, but his account of local traits does not appeal to such aspects of a person's psychology.[36] For example, Doris dismisses the appeal to attitudes to account for consistencies in character, arguing that a person's attitude does not correlate very much with her behavior (2002, p. 86). In response,

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[35] (Doris, 2002, p.66)

[36] See Chen (2014) and Adams (2006) who also make this criticism.

Doris may emphasize that his local traits account does not explain why or how are person has the trait, but rather, allows us to infer that a person has a local trait from her reliable behavior in narrow situations. His account has predictive power, but leaves the explanatory work for others to pursue. If this is so, then his account, while important and helpful for predicting behavior, invites supplementation from others on the psychologically relevant aspects of character, which may upon deeper analysis show some correlation to behavior. In an alternate account, Christian Miller includes these other aspects in his discussion of character and argues that they do correlate with behavior. Considering the larger psychological context of a person's character provides the explanation of traits needed in order to understand how we develop the traits we do and how we can do better.

 3. Miller and global traits. Unlike Doris, Miller claims that the evidence does indicate there are global traits, though these traits are rarely, if ever, virtues or vices.[37] He claims, "Most people actually do possess traits of character pertaining to the different moral domains, and these traits consist of various interrelated mental state dispositions pertaining to that domain" (2014a, p. 43). Miller argues that people do have characteristic beliefs and desires (mental state dispositions) that affect their behavior, but they do not constitute the kind of moral traits we typically talk about like compassion or hostility (p. 44). So, Miller calls them mixed traits.

 It is helpful to consider an example of a mixed trait to understand Miller's position. Take for instance the "Mixed Aggression Trait." This trait is considered mixed because its moral evaluation is mixed; some of the mental state dispositions comprising it are positive, others

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[37] (Miller, 2013, 2014a)

negative.[38] It is called an aggression trait because it pertains to that domain of morality; it deals

with behaviors and mental state dispositions having to do with aggressiveness. Mixed does not

mean virtue in some cases and vice in others; it is neither a virtue or vice, neither entirely

morally good nor bad. Miller claims this trait consists of certain mental state dispositions[39] like:

> Beliefs and desires concerned with harming the offender in order to retaliate for his offense, or to get even with him, or to get revenge.
>
> Beliefs and desires concerned with harming others in order to maintain a positive opinion of myself.
>
> Beliefs and desires concerned with harming others in order to obey instructions from a legitimate authority.
>
> Beliefs and desires concerned with not harming others when they are similar to me in important ways.
>
> Beliefs and desires concerned with not harming others when I am thought to bear a significant degree of personal responsibility for the harm and would be blamed if I did (2014a, p. 43). [40]

None of these dispositions that Miller takes to comprise the Mixed Aggression Trait are virtuous

or vicious. A virtuous mental state would involve doing a good deed for its own sake, which

means acting for the sake of another's welfare rather than personal gain such as a good mood or

praise or some other advantage.[41] A vicious mental state would involve doing wrong out of bad

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[38] He claims: "…the trait has both morally positive and morally negative elements that prevent it from being accurately classified using a simple virtue or vice label. On the one hand, it consists of some mental state dispositions which seem as if they would belong in a virtue like compassion, such as dispositions to empathetically help others for altruistic reasons. On the other hand, it consists of some mental state dispositions which seem as if they would belong to a vice like selfishness, such as dispositions to not help others if so doing would perpetuate a negative mood. Hence I claim… that because of this mixture of mental state dispositions the trait does not meet the requirements in the minimal threshold for being *either* a virtue *or* a vice" (pp. 156-157).

[39] Miller argues that character traits are grounded in mental state dispositions; the regularity in behavior follows from the regularity in one's disposition to have certain kinds of beliefs and desires (2014a, p. 30).

[40] For another example, see also his claim that a mixed helping trait involves "dispositions to form beliefs and desires pertaining to helping and guilt, embarrassment, positive and negative moods, elevation, activated moral norms, empathy anticipated approval, and anticipated embarrassment" (2013, p. 156).

motivations. While the motivating reasons in the mixed trait involve things like increasing

positive opinions of oneself, getting revenge, only helping others who are similar to oneself, or

acting out of fear of punishment or social disapproval, and these reasons are the same as the

reasons from which a vicious person acts. But, Miller argues that mixed traits are not vices.

Similarly, Miller claims that a mixed trait might contain a disposition to help for altruistic

reasons, but this is not enough to make the trait virtuous since the trait as a whole contains a mix

of morally positive and negative elements (2013, p. 157).

If we consider the altruistic disposition independently, it is like Doris' local virtue. But, if

it is considered as merely one part of a global trait relating to a specific domain of morality (such

as helping), the global trait is called mixed; it is neither a virtue nor a vice. In other words, where

Miller sees one global trait that may be expressed in different behaviors depending on the

psychologically salient features of a situation, Doris sees several local traits that are activated in

different nominally defined situations. Their views are not incompatible, but involve different

evaluative approaches and emphasize different types of situations in their explanations. Doris'

local traits can be local virtues, while Miller rejects the idea that the narrow instances of being

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[41] To do an act for its own sake means that one is not performing the act in order to pursue some non-moral, vicious, or selfish end, such as pleasure, honor, or avoiding punishment. Instead a person chooses the act because it is a good act. This does not exclude other factors such as desiring someone's welfare. A virtuous person would not only choose the act because it is good to help others, but would genuinely desire the welfare of the person she is helping. Consider Aristotle's claim that friendship involves wishing the good for another for her own sake and where it is not reciprocated, we call it good will (*eunoia*) (*EN*, VIII.2, 1155b30). Aristotle names friendliness a virtue (*EN*, IV.6) and defines friendly feeling in the *Rhetoric* as "wishing for [another] what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his…" (II.4, 1381a1). He also defines universal justice as the "complete exercise of complete virtue. And it is the complete exercise because the person is able to exercise virtue in relation to another, not only in what concerns himself; for many are able to exercise virtue in their own concerns, but unable in what relates to another" (*EN,* tr. Irwin, V.1, 1129b32-34). See also Aristotle's claim that what is done for the sake of others is nobler than what is done for one's own sake (*Rhetoric*, I.9, 1366b36-1367a6). Further evidence against the charge of egoism can be found in the *Politics* where Aristotle distinguishes correct and deviant constitutions according to whether they are aimed at the common good (correct) or at the good of the rulers (deviant) (III.7, 1279a28-31).

properly motivated are not enough to attribute virtue to a person. Miller is skeptical that the narrow instances of regular virtuous behavior will contain the right motivations.

By appealing to mental state dispositions, Miller argues for the global status of traits. If we look only to outward behavior, as Doris does in his interpretation of the situationist results, then what we see is fragmented behavior. But, if we consider not only the act a person engages in, but her psychological context, we can better understand how that particular instance of behavior fits into a character comprised of global (mixed) traits (Miller, 2014a, p. 46-47). Mixed traits are global because they are stable across situations understood on the basis of one's psychological context. In other words, the situation is defined in terms of how a person sees it (e.g., a stressful situation) rather than in terms of its nominal (or, third-party observable) features (e.g., an opportunity to help a distressed person). On Miller's view, if you acknowledge the broader psychological context and define situations with respect to what is psychologically salient to a person rather than by its nominal or objective features, you will find global traits that are stable across situations (p. 55). For example, if a person has a Mixed Helping Trait, she may be prone to help when the demand is low and she is aware of her ability to help, but not if she is in anxious mood. So, her helping behavior is fairly predictable in helping-situations when she is not in an anxious mood, and her not helping is also fairly predictable when she is in an anxious mood.

Miller argues that his view fits better with the evidence than the view put forth by Doris because if character were as fragmented as Doris' account claims, there would not be patterns of augmented behavior as a result of factors such as mood, guilt, or embarrassment (p. 200). While Doris' view holds that most people will have local virtues and vices, Miller argues instead that there is no reason to think people possess even local virtues or vices. For example, a person may

seem compassionate insofar as she regularly helps out at food banks, but there is much evidence

that people's helping behavior is motivated by such things as relieving guilt or maintaining a

positive mood, rather than the kind of beliefs or desires that typically constitute a traditional

virtue (pp. 201-202). Further, Miller claims his view is preferable because there is more

predictive power; we can predict that once put in a positive mood, people will be more helpful,

and that when in a negative mood, they will often fail to help (p. 201).

In response to Miller's 2013 and 2014 books on character and moral psychology, Doris

revisits his line of argument made in his 2002 book against the move from nominal to

psychologically salient situations. First, he claims that this move makes mixed traits look a lot

like local traits (e.g. honest-when-in-a-good-mood). Second, Doris claims there are morally

relevant situations that are the same for all because they involve shared ethical principles like

being honest or compassionate. Trading nominal for psychologically salient situations is not

desirable if it requires us to ignore morally significant aspects of a situation, like a person in

distress, and instead focus on the parts of the situation that are psychologically significant to the

person given her character, like being in a positive mood (Doris, 2002, p. 80; see also Doris'

2015 commentary). As Doris puts it:

> Changing the subject is not an excuse; finding consistency in one regard need not reduce
> discomfort regarding inconsistency in another. What is needed to salve this sort of
> dismay is good reason to think that inconsistency regarding the standard in question may
> be safely neglected in ethical judgment… when it comes to the standards embodied in
> ethical trait concepts – honesty, loyalty, compassion, and the rest – argument is required,
> and those not tempted to egoism or amoralism won't be easily convinced (Doris, 2002, p.
> 84).

4. Assessing Miller and Doris. Any account of character traits aims to do two things. On

the one hand, it should, for the most part, help us predict the behavior of the person who has the

trait. While we may not be able to accurately predict behavior on every occasion and in every

situation, it should be able to do well in predicting behavior most of the time. A virtuous person

will sometimes make a mistake, but knowing that she is virtuous will allow a third party to

predict she will likely do the right thing. On the other hand, an account of character traits should

also have explanatory power. Since a trait is more than a disposition to behave in certain ways,

an account of character traits should include more than an appeal to the typical behavior involved

in the activation of the trait; it should also appeal to the typical kinds of attitudes, emotions,

values, goals, beliefs, desires, and reasoning patterns of the person who has the trait. Saying that

a person is generous means more than that she always or often engages in generous behavior,

such as donating part of her income to charity; if she does it begrudgingly or in order to brag to

her peers about it, we would not call her generous.[42]

While Doris' view has predictive power, his view does not have much explanatory power

since it does not fully appreciate the other psychological features of character, such as one's

motives, goals, or attitudes.[43] Miller's view fares better on this count. His mixed traits model

makes sense of the empirical evidence that indicates there are strong correlations between

behavior and certain cognitive and emotional states, such as being in a good mood or wanting to

relieve feelings of guilt.[44] But, Miller's conclusion that virtue and vice are not only rare – which

is a generally accepted claim – but that almost no one has any amount of virtue or vice, does not

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[42] There is also an evaluative dimension to character; we praise or blame people for their character traits. See Kamtekar (2004, pp.461, 478-479) for discussion on this often neglected aspect of character.

[43] Doris does argue that the appeal to attitude is not promising since there is evidence that attitudes usually do not predict behavior. But, this does not make one's attitudes unimportant, but only indicates that there is a (bridgeable) gap between the attitudes and behavior of the ordinary person. Still, it is important to realize that our attitudes are not as causally efficacious as we believe (or hope) they are, which indicates a need to unify them with our other dispositions even if this unification is only possible within the context of good environment. For example, the fully virtuous person still relies to some extent on good circumstances to act well.

[44] (Miller, 2013, pp. 34, 64-66).

reflect an accurate understanding of having virtues or vices to certain degrees, as I will argue in section III. He claims that most people have mixed traits that are global, which means their behavior will be consistently affected by certain traits, but because they may not act for the right reasons, their traits will not resemble a virtue or vice in any degree. Miller's view also lacks economy. On it, any psychological inhibitor or enhancer can be counted as explanatory, making it hard to determine when a person is acting out of character. Any type of behavior might be explained by referring to some aspect of the global mixed trait or by appeal to a new part of the trait. By further excluding nominal features of a situation from his analysis, Miller's view also raises another problem. The problem is just as Doris states – there are certainly morally significant aspects of a situation that are relevant in order to morally assess a person's actions (or inactions) and character.

II. Aristotle and Situationism

Both Doris's and Miller's accounts present important distinctions that allow us to account for and accurately describe the character of the ordinary person. In this chapter, I will not speak to their disagreements or argue in favor of one over the other. Rather, my focus for the remainder of this chapter is on the way Aristotle is consistent with them. For my reconstruction of an account of the character of the ordinary person and actual virtue in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Politics* is not aimed at presenting a competing theory of the psychology of character. Rather, my aim is to address the problem of character luck. But, given that Aristotle's moral theory relies on a theory of psychology, it is necessary to show that his psychology is not incompatible with what is possible for us. If his theory of virtue and character was inconsistent with recent empirical work in psychology, then his moral theory would collapse as it would fail the minimal requirement for psychological realism.

While there have been different ways philosophers have attempted to respond to the problems posed by situationists such as reinterpreting the available evidence,[45] attacking notions of virtue or character operating in the literature,[46] appealing to the normative/descriptive distinction to "dodge" challenges,[47] or weakening the commitments of virtue ethics to accommodate situationist findings,[48] my approach looks back to Aristotle to show that his broader account of character is consistent with empirical findings. I do this by looking to other sources in Aristotle that speak to the character of the ordinary person and the actually virtuous person rather than the ideally virtuous person in the *EN*. Thus my approach differs from the approach often taken by virtue ethicists who appeal to ideal notions of virtue and character and argue that the situationist conception of character is impoverished. I also do not weaken my commitments to virtue ethics, but rather, show how Aristotle presents a more realistic account of virtue and character than he is often credited for.

1. Aristotle on actual virtue. In the last few years, work by psychologists and philosophers in the situationist debate has shifted and now focuses on understanding virtue or character in light of situationist results. My work on Aristotle advances the current state of this discussion by drawing attention to ordinary character and the realistic conception of virtue in Aristotle. In what follows, I show where Aristotle's views are consistent with recent empirical work. I include the work of Neera Badhwar, who also presents a view about virtue and character in Aristotle that shows his view is not as stringent as is traditionally conceptualized. She calls

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[45] (Badhwar, 2014) or (Athanassoulis, 2000)

[46] (Kamtekar, 2004) or (Sreenivasan, 2002)

[47] (Badhwar, 2009) or (Kupperman, 2009).

[48] (Merritt, 2000)

this view of character "realistic" and "actual."[49] I offer some modifications of her view along the

way, but also contribute more evidence in support of the view that the fully virtuous person is not

as unreachable a standard as presupposed. I then discuss Aristotle's character of the ordinary

person whose virtues are natural or modest. The results are two-fold. On the one hand, the notion

of full virtue as global and immune to circumstance is undermined by Aristotle's texts; his

account of actual virtue is more realistic. On the other hand, while the standard for virtue is still

very high, there is evidence in Aristotle's work for both the more modestly conceived virtues and

the fragmented character of the ordinary person.

A major objection to Aristotelian notions of virtue is that they are global traits and global

traits are psychologically impossible for humans.[50] Yet, if we catalogue what Aristotle says of

the virtues we see that they are in fact narrowly construed. First, Aristotle defines the brave

person very narrowly – he says that this person is concerned not with fearlessness or confidence

in the face of any type of undesirable thing like bad reputation, poverty, sickness, or

friendlessness (*EN*, III.6, 1115a10), aggression being committed against women and children

(III.6, 1115a22), being whipped for one's crimes (III.6, 1115a24), death in sickness (III.6,

1115a29) or death in shipwreck (III.6, 1115b6). Instead, bravery in the proper sense (*kuriōs*

legoit') involves the right amount of fear and confidence in the face of death, especially

courageous behavior in a noble war (III.6, 1115a34-35).

Several other virtues are also defined narrowly. Aristotle claims that genuine temperance

deals only with particular pleasures. They do not involve the pleasures of the soul, such as

learning, since these do not affect the body (*EN*, III.10, 1117b29). Temperance is concerned only

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[49] (Badhwar, 2014, p.35)

[50] See for example Harman (1999).

with bodily pleasures, and only of certain ones. Aristotle excludes those pleasures of sight, hearing, or smell, even though these might possibly be enjoyed to excess or deficiency, because he says no one would call a person intemperate with respect to these (III.10, 1118a4-17). Temperance involves only the pleasures of touch and taste (III.10, 1118a26). Further, even the pleasures of taste that concern temperance are narrow: they are the pleasures of eating and drinking and not simply discriminating amongst flavors (III.10, 1118a30-32). The pleasures of touch that concern temperance are similarly narrow; Aristotle counts only sexual gratification in this category (III.6, 1118a33, 1118b7).

Generosity's narrow definition excludes generosity in matters of war (such as allowing an enemy to live), pleasure (such as sharing some of one's dessert with another), or in judicial verdicts (such as prescribing a merciful punishment to a criminal) (IV.1, 1119b24). He claims that genuine generosity only concerns matters of the giving and taking of wealth, and more in the giving (IV.1, 1119b25). It is further distinguished from the narrower virtue, magnificence, which is concerned with the giving and taking of money or things money can buy on a large scale. Aristotle claims magnificence is "like generosity, concerned with wealth, but it does not extend, as generosity does, to all actions involving wealth, but only to those involving heavy expenses, and in them it exceeds generosity in its large scale" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, IV.2, 1122a20-22). Like generosity and magnificence, Aristotle narrowly distinguishes two other virtues, magnanimity (or being "great-souled") and proper ambition in terms of how large the scale is for desiring and deserving honor. If one desires great honors and deserves them, one is magnanimous (IV.3,

1123b3). If the matters concerning honor are small or medium in size, the virtuous person is said

to have proper ambition (IV.4, 1125b5).[51]

Unlike the understanding of honesty in Hartshorne and May's honesty studies, which

included a range of behaviors not clearly related to one another, such as cheating on tests, lying

about what one has done, or pocketing loose change,[52] Aristotle defines truthfulness very

narrowly so that it only concerns "those who are truthful… both in words and in actions… in

their claims about themselves" (tr. Irwin, IV.7, 1127a20). He excludes truthfulness in agreements

concerning justice, claiming that this involves a different virtue (IV.7, 1127b1).

Lastly of the narrowly defined virtues, Aristotle divides justice into several traits, each

narrower than the last. His first division is between universal and particular justice: the former

having to do with "the complete exercise of complete virtue" in relation to others (V.1, 1129b32)

and the latter with having the appropriate desire for gain (V.2, 1130b5). Particular justice is

concerned with fairness, and Aristotle further divides this virtue into distributive (dealing with

the distribution of wealth and honors) and retributive justice (rectifying wrongs committed in

transactions) (V.2, 1130b30-1131a1). The divisions do not end here, and retributive justice is

even further divided. First, it is divided into voluntary and involuntary injustices, which depends

on whether both parties had willingly entered a contract together or if the wrong was committed

against another party who did not consent. Second, involuntary injustices are divided into two

kinds: secret or violent. For example, a person can harm another in secret, like committing

adultery or she can harm another violently, like assaulting another (V.2, 1131a2-9).

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[51] See Kamtekar (2004, pp. 479-480).

[52] See Kamtekar (2004, pp.468-470) for more on this criticism of the honesty studies.

Aristotle also defines some vices narrowly. He claims, for instance, that there are several vices corresponding to the virtue mildness. Of the excessive vices, Aristotle names irascibility (quickly angered, toward the wrong people, at the wrong times, and more than is right) (IV.5, 1126a14-15), choleric people (those who are irascible about and at everything) (IV.5, 1126a19), bitter people (those who get angry for a long time, until they get revenge) (IV.5, 1126a20-22), and irritable people (those who are irritated by the wrong things, more severely and for longer than is right, until they get revenge) (IV.5, 1126a28-29).

Along with individual virtues and vices, Aristotle also narrowly defines certain states of character. Like intemperance, Aristotle distinguishes between different notions of incontinence in accordance with which pleasures are pursued excessively. He claims that unqualified (*haplōs*) incontinence concerns the same pleasures of the body that temperance does: those of food, drink, and sex (VII.4, 1148a5-10). Those who excessively pursue other pleasures are called incontinent by similarity (*homoiotēta*). They are call incontinent with respect to wealth, victory, honor, or spirit, for instance (VII.4, 1147b34-35). He later says the relation between these types of incontinence is one of homonymy, that is, they are the same in name only (VII.5, 1149a24). Given that these conditions bear some resemblance to one another, the homonymous relation is not merely one of chance, but suggests some deeper relation.[53]

Aristotle distinguishes continence and incontinence from softness and resistance. The former two involve overcoming, or being overcome by, pleasure, while the latter two involve being overcome by, or overcoming, pain, respectively. Aristotle claims that most people are in

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[53] See Ward (2008) for a systematic investigation of homonymy in Aristotle.

between continence or resistance and incontinence or softness (VII.7, 1150a13-16). Thus, the ordinary person behaves in variable ways when it comes to pleasures and pains.[54]

Aristotle lastly distinguishes between two kinds of incontinence: impulsiveness and weakness. The latter sort deliberates, but is later overcome by appetite. The former sort is guided by feelings because she has not deliberated (VII.7, 1150b20-23). Because it is necessary for the incontinent person to have choice, which implies she has deliberated, the point here is not that deliberation is wholly absent, but that it does not occur in the moment; one is lead immediately by the appearances before her reason can catch up (VII.7, 1150b27-29). All types of character here – continent, incontinent, soft, and resistant – are thus narrowly defined.

In sum, many of the actual virtues of the fully virtuous person are narrowly defined and so the objection that they are global traits is not based on an accurate reading of the text. Still, we might hold that the truly brave person will be brave not only when facing certain dangers on the battlefield, but in other bravery-related situations such as when facing poverty or when standing up for herself. Perhaps she is most genuinely exercising her virtue when facing death at war, but we might also expect her to respond bravely in other situations calling for reactions similar to those she displays when at war, in particular, having the right amount of fear and confidence when facing dangers to oneself, such as death or financial ruin. For it would be strange indeed to call a person brave who was too afraid to stand up to physical bullying. Whether or not Aristotle thinks the genuinely brave person would also behave in ways that were brave "by similarity," however, is a matter of interpretation since he does not say explicitly. If we stick only to what he

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[54] See Kristjánsson (2008, pp. 68-71) for more discussion on these types of character as well as the character of the "many."

does say, however, we have some reason to think he is only concerned with genuine instances of the virtues, which are narrowly defined.

Showing that full virtues are narrow for Aristotle, however, does not necessarily establish him as being consistent with Doris' local traits view. For the local virtues that Doris conceives of seem to be far more situationally sensitive than Aristotle's virtues. For example, a person who is helpful when in a good mood has a trait that relies primarily upon her circumstances being favorable enough to induce a good mood. By contrast, Aristotle's local virtues seem only to rely on circumstances insofar as one's circumstance provide an opportunity to respond virtuously. The brave soldier only needs to be in a situation that calls for bravery in order to activate her virtue. She does not need minor situational boosts, like a pleasant smell, to act well. In fact, she often does well despite the absence of pleasant circumstances.

While Aristotle's virtues are thought to operate independently of the favorability of one's circumstances, there is still evidence that this is not the whole story. For his claims in the *Politics* suggest that even a fully virtuous person will err and will need a good environment to facilitate virtuous activity and prevent vice. For example, he recognizes that even fully virtuous people will still sometimes do wrong.[55] Badhwar argues that there is a minimal threshold for saying a person has a virtue even if it does not issue in behavior that perfectly conforms to the virtue in all situations. In support of this claim, she cites Aristotle, who says that even the virtuous person may have trouble discerning the mean (2014, p. 38). Aristotle says, "For sometimes, indeed, we ourselves praise deficient people and call them mild, and sometimes praise quarrelsome people and call them manly" (*EN*, tr. Irwin, II.9, 1109b14-26). He does not say that this praise is

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[55] For in Aristotle's discussion of the ideal constitution, where all citizens are fully virtuous, he mentions laws that involve punishing citizens for doing wrong (*Politics*, VII.16, 1335b38-1336a2; VII.17, 1336b8-12).

mistaken. Later, Aristotle also claims that even the virtuous person sometimes deviates from

mean but that he errs in certain directions. He states, "It is also very definitively proper to the

generous person to exceed so much in giving that he leaves less for himself" (tr. Irwin, IV.1,

1120b3-4). Aristotle claims that the behavior of an actually generous person will not always hit

the mean. Thus, full virtue does not mean that a person will never err when it comes to acting

virtuously.

Further, Aristotle claims in the *Politics* that there should be safeguards in a city to prevent

citizens from acting out of self-interest at the expense of others (VII.10, 1330a15-6), suggesting

that even the fully virtuous person will need to be in favorable social or political circumstances

to prevent bad behavior.[56] In a similar vein, Badhwar acknowledges Aristotle's claim in the

Politics that a virtuous person can become corrupt if she lives in corrupting situations, such as

when political power is unconstrained by law. He states, "For appetite is like a wild beast,

passion perverts rulers even when they are the best of men" (*Politics*, tr. Reeve, 1287a31-32).

Badhwar lastly considers Aristotle's notion of constrained behavior, discussed in both *EN* and

the *Politics*. When an agent is constrained by force or ignorance, she may be exculpated or pitied

rather than blamed. Here, Aristotle recognizes that a situation may overcome a person, causing

her to do something she would not do in better circumstances. Consider the following example.

> No one willingly throws cargo overboard, without qualification, but anyone with any
> sense throws it overboard to save himself and the others (*EN*, tr. Irwin, III.1, 1110a10-
> 11).

Aristotle recognizes that there might be situations where a person's actions do not line up with

what she would have chosen if the situation were more conducive to choosing rightly. Thus, he

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[56] I discuss these points more fully in chapter five.

does not fail to consider that we might face situations that demand "greater virtue than human nature allows" (*Politics*, tr. Reeve, III.15, 1286b27). This last point about constrained action will not make as big a splash with situationists since they argue that there is little force involved – Milgram's experimenter merely said things like "the experiment must go on" – and that the morally right thing to do should have been obvious. At the very least, they are concerned with situations that do not call for heroism and ask minimal moral effort on the part of participants.[57] Setting aside cases of constrained behavior, there are still plenty of remarks made by Aristotle that suggest there is a limit to what an actually virtuous person can accomplish and how important a conducive environment is to her development and maintenance of virtue.

2. Aristotle on ordinary virtues. Badhwar similarly claims that Aristotle rejects globalism when discussing the virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As evidence, she cites Aristotle's claim about bravery that "some people who are cowardly in the dangers of war are nonetheless generous, and face with confidence the dangers of losing money" (*EN*, Irwin trans., II.6, 1115a20-22). Badhwar draws from this claim that a brave person might be a coward in war, yet brave with respect to money loss, suggesting that her bravery is local, rather than global. She further draws the conclusion that *actual* virtue is not based on so high of a standard given that a person with bravery-in-matters-of-money-loss might still be considered brave. But, Aristotle's statement here applies to whom he calls "brave by similarity (*homoiotēta*)." Badhwar suggests that the distinction here is between ideal and actual virtue; the ideally virtuous person has bravery globally, while the actually brave person is only locally brave. But, this seems to be an interpretive stretch. For Aristotle explicitly says that this person is *not* brave, only similar to the

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[57] Consider Doris: "My arguments do not depend on assuming any especially demanding ethical standard. Unlike 'heroic' virtues such as courage, compassion is the subject of quite commonplace ethical demands, demands that are customarily applied to ordinary people in ordinary circumstances" (2002, p. 29).

brave person. Aristotle makes this remark about other states that are similar to bravery. He

claims that the person who fights in response to being angered and who takes pleasure in

exacting a penalty has "something similar (*paraplēsion*) to bravery" (tr. Irwin, III.8, 1117a4). He

further claims that "the bravery caused by spirit (*thumos*) would seem to be the most natural sort

(*phusikōtatē*), and to be genuine bravery once it has also acquired decision (*prohairēsis*) and goal

(*to heneka andreia*)" (tr. Irwin, III.8, 1117a5).

Aristotle's claims about states that are "similar" to virtue are better interpreted as

applying to ordinary virtues had by the ordinary person than to the actual virtues of a fully

virtuous person. For Aristotle uses natural bravery as an example of a virtue that is similar to

genuine bravery, and natural virtue is clearly distinguished from full virtue (*EN*, VI.13, 1144b4-

12). These virtues "by similarity" are virtues to a lesser degree than full, actual virtue since they

do not capture what Aristotle thinks is primarily definitive of the virtue. For example, the

actually brave person is brave primarily because of his dispositions to think, feel, and act with

the right amount of confidence and fear when facing death, especially one in a noble war. By

contrast, the ordinary bravery of a lower middle-class person when faced with very large medical

bills is similar to real bravery, but not quite there. While she may face certain dangers of

financial loss with appropriate fear and confidence and act with composure, what ultimately

defines true bravery is facing death bravely. Evidence of ordinary, moderate virtue can also be

found in Aristotle's discussion of the middle class (*hoi mesoi*) in the *Politics*. As I have shown in

chapter five, Aristotle treats this group as having developed virtues to some extent on account of

their moderate circumstances (*Politics*, IV.11, 1295b2-12), though these virtues are far from the full virtues of the *EN*.[58]

The natural virtues and vices attributed to the young, old, and those in the prime of life in the *Rhetoric* are further examples of ordinary, natural virtue. Throughout *Rhetoric* II.12-14, Aristotle dedicates a chapter to the typical temperaments (*ēthē*) that accompany the following ages: youth, prime of life, and old age. First, Aristotle claims that the temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) of the young tends to be marked by excessive: they love too much, trust too readily, are courageous on account of their naturally spirited temperament, and err on the side of excess.[59] Second, the *Rhetoric* claims that the temperament (*phusikai hexeis*) of the person in old age is characterized by deficiency. Because of their weakened desires and appetites, they tend to be more self-controlled and cautious, and since they have been met with many disappointments, they tend to seek the useful over the fine. Third, and lastly, Aristotle claims that the temperaments (*ēthē*) of those in their prime of life express the mean between youth and age

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[58] We might compare a modest virtue to the way Badhwar interprets the experimental studies done on good mood. Badhwar argues that good moods arising from ambient smells or noises can be said to *supplement*, not *supplant* standing reasons to help by making it easier to help (2014, p. 41). She argues that helping behavior is not a causal by-product of a good mood (as Miller holds in his global traits view), but rather, these studies show that good people, when happy, want to share the happiness, which is a good trait (p. 42). So while Miller claims that being in a good mood is the sole cause of subsequent helping behavior, Badhwar argues that the mood enhancers' correlation to helping behavior indicates a person has the good trait of wanting to spread her good mood to others; the good mood is not the primary motivation for her behavior, but rather, an accompanying one, and thus her unawareness of its having been caused by something like a good smell is not problematic. Though she applies this description to the actually virtuous person, her explanation here again seems to be a better fit for the modestly or non-ideally virtuous person. For that person's virtues are, for the most part, accounted for by her circumstances. Though the fully virtuous person's virtues are also reliant on good circumstances, the extent to which this is the case is far more limited; a fully virtuous person will ultimately act from the right motivations.

[59] He describes the temperaments of young people in the following way:
> [The young] look at the good side rather than the bad, not having yet witnessed many instances of wickedness. They trust others readily…They are sanguine; nature warms their blood as though with excess wine; and besides that, they have not yet often been cheated… they have exalted notions because they have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations… [Youth] would always rather (*mallon*) do noble deeds than useful ones: their lives are regulated more by [character] (*ēthei*) than by reasoning; and whereas reasoning leads us to choose what is useful, [virtue] (*aretē*) leads us to choose what is noble (*kalon*) (*Rhetoric*, tr. Roberts, II.12, 1389a33-35).

(II.14, 1390a1), possessing the advantages of youth and age, such as temperance and courage

(II.14, 1390b8-9). Aristotle's attribution of the various virtues to these age groups refers to

natural, not full virtue; his descriptions of the temperaments focus on the appetitive part of the

virtue. Though his discussion of temperaments here lines up with various ages, we can use what

he says of the various temperaments to apply to anyone. His point is merely to discuss which

temperaments are generally found in certain age groups, but this does not mean that they cannot

be found in people of other ages.

In sum, Aristotle suggests that there are ordinary virtues – virtues that fall short of full

virtue, but resemble it. While Badhwar errs in calling the ordinary virtues of *EN* actual virtues,

she draws the right conclusion that they are virtues enough. She states,

> Even if dispositions are not global, if people exhibit reliable patterns in their attitudes and
> behavior, if their deliberative, emotional, and behavioral responses to people and events
> they encounter daily in pursuit of their goals are usually consistent and predictable, they
> have dispositions, and if those goals and dispositions are praiseworthy, they have virtues
> (Badhwar, 2014, p. 38).[60]

The virtues that are only similar to virtue in the fullest sense are virtues enough insofar as they

promote virtuous activity (albeit, to a lesser extent than full virtue) in the person who has them.

They are akin to natural virtues of *EN* VI.13 and *Rhetoric* II.12-14 and the modest virtues of the

middle class at *Politics* IV.11. They are the virtues of the ordinary citizen: heavily dependent on

one's circumstances to both develop and be sustained and thus less stable than full virtue. These

modest virtues are more similar to the local virtues Doris describes because of their modularity

and dependence on favorable circumstances. While these modest virtues might still be a little

broader than Doris' sociable-at-office-parties kind of traits, they still indicate that many of the

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[60] Badhwar uses an aggregative solution rejected by Doris (2002, p. 75) when she claims that people display reliable
patterns in thought and behavior.

virtues Aristotle defines were not as globalist as is often believed and that modest virtue might still be found in the ordinary person. In other words, current research in social psychology can help us determine just how narrow these traits tend to be and which circumstances affect them, but fixing the line does not undermine Aristotle's own understanding of virtue and character.

3. Fragmented character and behavioral inconsistencies. While Aristotle characterizes the temperaments that accompany age as containing certain inclinations, he does not leave out the possibility that a person will behave in different ways depending on her situation. For example, the ends for which an old person aims may change in relation to what she finds useful at the time: while helping another person may be of use in securing respect or admiration, cheating another person may on another occasion benefit her. Regardless of age, the person who is inclined towards utility will display these inconsistencies. Being inclined towards courage will also meet with inconsistencies if it is not a fully habituated state: a person may be courageous when it comes to money matters, but not when it comes to standing up for herself when being insulted or attacked.

Further evidence from the *Rhetoric* is consistent with the situationist conclusion that ordinary people are easily manipulated by minor situational factors such as mood change. In his advice to the orator, Aristotle recognizes the power that a change of mood can have on the way a person thinks and subsequently acts: he claims it is important not only for the orator to make a good argument and to appear to be of good character, but to be able to put her audience in the right frame of mind because,[61] he says, "when people are feeling friendly and placable, they think one sort of thing; when they are feeling angry or hostile, they think either something totally

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[61] These three constitute Aristotle's three means of persuasion: *logos*, *ēthos*, and *pathos*.

different or the same thing with a different intensity" (tr. Roberts, *Rhetoric*, II.1, 1377b30-1378a1). Here, Aristotle recognizes that people will think differently if they are in different moods. After acknowledging the significant impact that a person's mood can have on her judgment, Aristotle spends ten chapters examining various emotions so that the orator knows how to arouse them in his audience in order to be successful in his persuading.

When Aristotle catalogues the emotions, he focuses on three aspects: the state of mind of the person, to whom the emotion is felt, and on what grounds the emotion arises (II.1, 1378a24-25). In other words, he recognizes that our emotions are influenced by the kinds of situations we are in or the kind of people with which we are dealing. This means that he acknowledges that the way a situation is framed or presented can alter the way an ordinary person decides upon a course of action by affecting her emotional state. Like the framing bias studied by Tversky and Kahneman,[62] Aristotle's catalogue of the various emotions and what situations give rise to them aims at giving the orator information that can help alter the way an audience will choose by presenting his case in a certain way. For example, if an orator can make his audience feel friendly towards a person who is about to be tried, they will more likely regard him as not having done wrong (II.1, 1378a2).[63] Aristotle therefore recognizes that being in a good mood can make a person more likely to be merciful to others. This idea is emphasized and extended in the

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[62] (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981)

[63] This is not to say that Aristotle endorses the manipulation of emotions as a proper way to persuade an audience. This is the kind of persuasion upon which he accuses Sophists of relying. He claims, "it is not right to pervert the judge [or jurymen] by moving him to anger or envy or pity – one might well warp a carpenter's rule before using it" (tr. Roberts, I.1, 1354a25-26). Instead, the proper orator will use the best available means of persuasion, which includes putting the audience in the right state of mind along with using good arguments and establishing one's credibility (I.1, 1355b26-7). This is different than the sophist who, rather than putting the audience into the correct frame of mind, excites whatever emotion will allow him to successfully persuade his audience. For example, a sophist will have no problem fear-mongering, while a proper orator would never resort to such means. It may, however, be necessary to around compassion in his audience in order to show them that they ought to endorse a certain policy that will better promote the common good.

various studies done on good mood and helping behavior.[64] In these recent studies, the focus extends beyond the moods and subsequent judgments of an audience or jury, and looks at the effect in everyday situations where there is opportunity to perform a minor good deed.

III. Ordinary Character as a Temperament: An Example

In Aristotelian terminology, I consider the nature of the ordinary person's character to be akin to having a certain kind of temperament; she will have inclinations to act in certain ways, but they will be manifested in different ways depending on the kinds of situations she faces. The notion of a temperament is useful because it is not primarily concerned with a person's reasoning, which has been attacked by situationists as being just as, if not more, situationally sensitive.[65] Rather, a temperament includes the affective inclinations of a person's character, which have been shown to enjoy their own level of stability.[66]

Consider Sue who has a generous temperament. She will be inclined to give some money to homeless people whom she meets on the street, but when it comes to lending money to her

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[64] (Levin and Isen, 1972 & 1975)

[65] See Merritt, et al (2010) for a thorough discussion of this point and the empirical literature.

[66] Jerome Kagan presents early work on temperament, positing broadly two temperaments present in infancy: being inhibited or uninhibited (1994). Later work has shown that the presence of one of these temperaments exhibits continuity, correlating strongly with how a person in late adolescence or early adulthood responds to social situations involving the anticipation of a reward or punishment (Guyer, et al, 2014).
    The Five-Factor model, popular amongst personality theorists, posits 5 broad personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, see Miller (2014a, ch. 6) for discussion of this view. People vary on which traits they have and to what degree, but they involve a person's temperamental inclinations such as affection (or agreeableness) or anxiousness or hostility (included under neuroticism) that correlate with how a person thinks and behaves.
    See also Aaron Ben Ze'ev's work on emotions, especially his claim that affective traits, such as shyness or susceptibility to be embarrassed, display tendencies to behave in affective manners and last longer than emotions that are caused by one's context (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, pp. 88-89). The difference here raises an important distinction between pleasant moods that are caused by minor rewards, such as being in a pleasant-smelling environment, and a person's tendency to be in a pleasant mood, which is not as responsive to contextual features and is far more stable.
    McCrae et al have also found stability amongst the personality traits named in the Five-Factor model and how different traits might be more emphasized in different ages. For example, people aged 18-30 tend to have lower degrees of neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience and higher degrees of agreeableness and conscientious (2000, p. 183).

friends, she is reluctant because she worries she will not be paid back. The difference in her

behaviors here lines up with the difference in nominal situations. This view is conducive to both

Doris' and Miller's views. On Doris' view, we can say that she is generous-towards-the-

homeless, but not generous-towards-friends. Still, she might also be inconsistent in her

generosity towards homeless people, say if she is in a rush, anxious, or nervous. In other words,

different psychological situations will affect her behavior. So on Miller's view, she has a global

Mixed Generosity Trait comprised of beliefs or desires that issue in generous behavior when she

is in a certain mood, but not when she is in other moods. Because her generosity depends on her

mood, Miller would not consider it real generosity to any degree. But, for Aristotle, natural

virtue does not require that one acts for the right reasons; a person with natural virtue lacks

practical wisdom.[67] Further, while Miller's view rightly suggests that psychologically salient

situations are important to explaining and assessing a person's character, he does not say

anything about the frequency of a person's mood. Drawing on the evidence for mood enhancers

and inhibitors,[68] Miller argues that a person's construal of a situation can give rise to certain

psychological states, like guilt or anxiety, that may reliably promote or inhibit certain moral

behavior, like helping.[69] These states, however, are those that arise when faced with certain

situations.[70] Such states are not as stable as states comprising a person's temperament.[71] So,

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[67] *EN,* VI.13, 1144b4-12. See below for the full quote.

[68] For example, finding a dime in a phone booth is thought to increase helping behavior because it puts the agent in a good mood. Thus, the person's good mood can be manipulated by nominal features of a situation.

[69] (Miller, 2013, esp. pp. 131-135).

[70] For example, Miller claims that one might tend to feel guilty after performing or omitting certain actions or forming a particular intention. He distinguishes this from having a general trait of guilt where one would tend to feel guilty in a wide-range of situations on the basis of one's own evaluative standards. He states that he is concerned with the former and not the latter (2013, p. 31, fn. 6).

while he argues that we can reliably predict that a person will be helpful *when* put in a good mood, he does not consider *how often* a person is in a good mood. For instance, if a person is often in a good mood, her helpfulness will be a global trait. An appeal to temperament can do this work since it is comprised of the emotional inclinations of a person.

In sum, we can say that Sue has a generous temperament, is naturally generous, or has some local or mixed generous trait. The difference is in terminology, but the phenomenon is the same: she is inclined to act generously in certain nominal situations, but is not always consistent in those situations. She is generous, but her generosity is not a settled state like a virtue is, and so she relies heavily on favorable conditions for her virtue to be activated. She has not consciously habituated it, but rather, she happens to be inclined towards being generous.

To best explain Sue's generous temperament, we should look at how she became the kind of person who has such a temperament. For in considering the development of her ordinary character, we can see why the result is a less than fully developed set of character traits.[72] Proceeding in this way also reveals the implications of ordinary character for moral education, which I will come back to later. I divide the developmental process into roughly two parts meant to capture major influences on one's character, but not to be exhaustive: (1) the early habituation process, which is affected by one's natural temperaments and upbringing, and (2) the later habituation process undergone by adult's as they make free choices.

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[71] (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, pp. 88-89).

[72] For more discussion on the importance of understanding moral development for understanding character and responsibility, see Annas (2011), Nussbaum (2001), Sherman (1991), or Burnyeat (1980). I discuss this view in chapter three.

We begin with Sue's natural temperament. As Jerome Kagan argues, temperaments are present from very early on and may not result in behavior consistent with one's temperament.[73] So while Sue is born with a temperament conducive to generosity, she may not consistently respond in generous ways. Sue's naturally generous temperament might mean she is uninhibited, has a general sensitivity to others' needs, is empathetic, naturally desires to help others, or is simply naturally disposed towards generous acts. Perhaps she has some mix of these inclinations or others of a similar type. Her natural generous temperament might exist in a variety of ways, but, like Miller's global mixed traits, it involves some set of generosity-involving beliefs or desires that issue in generous behavior. Consider the similarity to Aristotle's description of natural virtue.

> It seems that the various kinds of character (*ēthē*) inhere in all of us, somehow or other, by nature. We tend to be just, capable of self-control, and to show all our other character traits from the time of our birth. Yet we still seek something more, the good in a fuller sense, and the possession of these traits in another way. For it is true that children and beasts are endowed with natural qualities or characteristics (*hai phusikai…hexeis*), but it is evident that without intelligence (*nous*) these are harmful. This much, to be sure, we do seem to notice: as in the case of a mighty body which, when it moves without vision, comes down with a mighty fall because it cannot see, so it is in the matter under discussion (*EN,* tr. Ostwald, VI.13, 1144b4-12).

Unlike the virtue generosity, Sue does not consciously habituate the trait[74] and so her generosity is fragmented rather than robust. She will be prone to making mistakes or omissions since she does not have practical wisdom.[75]

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[73] (1994, pp. 35-37). In fact, he claims that though we may be born with certain temperaments, they do not determine our later development; they increase the probability that we will develop certain characteristics, but other factors influence our development, such as our environment (pp. 35-36). I consider the effect of a person's environment on her character in the next part of her early habituation process – her upbringing.

[74] A trait will surely develop to some extent before a person becomes an adult, but it is not until she is able to choose actions for themselves that she begins to solidify her character in the form of a set of robust traits, *viz.* a *hexis prohairetikē* (*EN*, III.5, 1114b30-1115a2; X.9, 1180a1-3, 15-17). See Brickhouse (1991, p. 144) and Meyer (1993, ch. 5) for discussion on this.

As Sue develops, she is impacted by both her natural propensities[76] and her upbringing. Her natural inclinations might be encouraged, or they might be ignored or rejected while other values are emphasized in her everyday life. Since she tends to be in the same situations and have contact with the same kinds of people, her natural traits will become localized. She will begin developing certain habits that are influenced by those around her. These habits will have an effect on her character as she becomes an adult. In fact, some of the implicit biases she forms as a youth will extremely difficult, if at all possible, to undo later in life.[77] Aristotle acknowledges this point in the *EN*:

> characteristics (*hexeis*) develop from corresponding activities (*energeiai*). For that reason, we must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind, since any variations in them will be reflected in our characteristics. Hence it is no small matter whether one habit or another is inculcated in us from early childhood; on the contrary, it makes considerable difference, or, rather, all the difference (*EN*, tr. Ostwald, II.1, 1103b21-25).

Given the importance of a person's upbringing with respect to her later moral development, a person's moral character is subjected to the luck involved in the kind of social and political world in which she is raised. In Aristotle's *EN*, he presents an account to an audience of free, Greek men, the supposed ideal candidates for virtue. While Aristotle endorsed some of the harmful prejudices of his time, his view has important insights that do not depend on holding

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[75] While situationists deny that an appeal to practical wisdom is satisfying given the amount of cognitive biases people tend to display in their practical reasoning (see Merritt, et al (2010) for a detailed account of these biases), I have two responses here. One is that this point can at most support the rarity thesis; virtue is rare because the practical wisdom required for it is rare. This is not something I deny. Second, the wisdom required for virtue needs experience to develop and may be hindered by having limited experiences or opportunities to learn. This suggests that a good community and a good education is required for developing one's practical wisdom, a point that is endorsed by several philosophers responding to situationism (Doris, 2015, esp. ch. 5), (Badhwar, 2014, p. 39), (Haybron, 2014, pp. 255-256), and (Miller 2014c, pp. 25-27), and is supported by what Aristotle says in the *EN* and *Politics*.

[76] See Guyer, et al (2014), Rapee (2014), and McAdams and Olson (2010) for recent work in psychology on the impact of natural temperament on one's later personality and character development.

[77] See Galinsky and Moskowitz (2007) who show that attempting to repress one's implicit biases might have the effect of amplifying them.

those prejudices against non-Greeks and women. So, we can still argue that his view of moral

development in the *EN* assumes a person has been born with the temperaments[78] and has had the

kind of upbringing most conducive for developing full virtue later in life. In chapter five, I

outlined the extent to which Aristotle thinks one's upbringing affects her character development

and moral awareness. While we might undo some of the bad habits we have picked up early in

life, some will remain incorrigible. For example, explaining to people the phenomenon of group

effect has been shown to increase the amount of helping behavior in subsequent experiments

resembling Darley and Batson's Good Samaritan study.[79] Utilizing other debiasing methods have

also been shown to help, such as considering the opposite strategy, which helps overconfidence

and hindsight biases to a small extent.[80] Yet, making people conscious of their implicit biases

detected on the Implicit Association Test (IAT)[81] does not seem to help weaken or eliminate the

bias. In fact, some psychologists have found that focusing on one's implicit biases with the

intention of suppressing them has the unsavory result of making them worse.[82] Thus, with

respect to certain areas of our moral life, in Aristotelian terminology, the best some of us can do

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[78] As a Greek male would in comparison with women, Europeans, or Asians, according to Aristotle. The right temperament for Aristotle would involve a balance of intelligence and spirit.

[79] (Miller, 2014a, p.233)

[80] (Gilovich, 2011). Aristotle utilizes the considering the opposite strategy in order to strengthen confidence in his view: "We must, however, not only state the true view, but also explain the false view; for an explanation of that promotes confidence. For when we have an apparently reasonable explanation of why a false view appears true, that makes us more confident in the true view" (*EN*, VII.14, 1154a23-26).

[81] Recently, the conclusions drawn from studies on implicit biases suggesting a link between them and unsavory behavior have been questioned because these experiments are fundamentally flawed (Singal, 2017). Still, there are several other studies on the pervasiveness of cognitive bias that together give us reason to believe that our consciously held values are not always operative on the subconscious level. See Gilovich (2011) for a study of these biases.

[82] (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2007). There are other studies that show that other strategies are more successful in training oneself to remove implicit bias. For example, one study shows that training a participant to negate stereotypes is not as effective as training a participant to affirm counter-stereotypes (Gawronski et al, 2008).

is to be continent; we can consciously choose the right actions even if our desires and emotions do not align with them. Still, we can use information gathered from the empirical sciences to better our community in order to prevent these bad habits from forming in the first place and to offset their negative effects later. Though presenting a developed proposal for how we might do this is beyond the scope of this project, one suggestion is for negative or harmful images of women and minorities that are pervasive in the media to be replaced by positive ones in order to prevent bad associations from forming and to promote the formation of good ones instead. Studies have shown that exposing individuals to counter-stereotypical exemplars, such as pictures of Martin Luther King, Jr., have the effect of mitigating bias in participants' racial attitudes.[83]

When a person reaches adulthood, she is in a better position to make choices that express her values. For Aristotle, an adult has the capacity to make choices that solidify her character.[84] In his account of the second stage of moral development in the *EN*, this requires a level of control and awareness that social psychology has shown us most people do not have. This is because most people are not born with ideal temperaments and do not grow up in ideal circumstances. By considering the impediments to moral awareness and control, we should revise our understanding of responsibility by presenting a broader account. While some people may lack the moral awareness needed for full responsibility, we can still hold them responsible for the kind of people they are in proportion to the access they have to moral awareness and moral knowledge. A broader account of responsibility derived from Aristotle will hold a person

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[83] (Wittenbrink, Judd, and Park, 2001).

[84] See *EN* III.5 as well as Kristjánsson (2014a&b), Destrée (2011), Kerr (2011), Lawrence (2011), Meyer (1993, ch. 5), and Curren (1989) for discussion on forming one's character as an adult.

responsible with respect to her capacity to develop virtue. If this capacity is inhibited by her circumstances, rather than, say, her own resistance to criticism, she will not be as responsible for her character as someone who has access to moral knowledge, but continues to choose wrong.[85]

By focusing on the stages of moral development rather than simply judging the character of ordinary people to be far from an ideal standard of robustness, we can understand how most people develop the fragmented characters they do. Knowing that the source of this fragmentation is bad moral luck with respect to one's genetic and social inheritances provides useful insight into how we might correct the problem. Because our upbringings and social and political environment are so important, a focus on structural changes that does not only offset our tendencies to make bad choices, but that are also more conducive to developing virtue is necessary for us to live well. Further, Aristotle also provides a way in which we can still understand responsibility for character despite its (un)lucky influences: we can bear in mind one's capacity to develop and sustain virtue when holding one responsible for one's character and what follows from it. Thus, we can expect to have more for which we are accountable as the empirical data informs institutional policies, making moral knowledge more widely available. And so, Aristotle's account of responsibility and ordinary character is not only consistent with the current empirical evidence, but its focus on the developmental aspect of character can guide our evaluative judgments as well as suggest ways we might change the obstacles we face to developing well.

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[85] An exception might be made, however, for someone whose resistance to criticism is caused by a difficult upbringing, such as one in which she was excessively criticized in cruel ways. Notice that this involves a person's circumstances inhibiting her capacity to reform her character.

IV. Further Implications for Moral Education

In my emphasis on being fortunate with respect to one's genetic and social inheritances and natural temperaments, I have indicated how the habituation of virtue is possible. Most people do fail, but it is not wholly their own faults. The habituation of virtue requires not only individual effort, but a conducive environment that can help in the developmental process by making one's cognition and habits less fragmented. While we cannot change what natural moral advantages with which people are born, we can make changes to their environment that encourage and support the development and maintenance of good traits.[86] Important to this process is also eliminating bad influences that overtime can develop into harmful implicit biases.[87]

A further objection can be made that manipulating situations is paternalistic and thus inhibits, rather than encourages, virtue.[88] But, if our focus is on moral development, the changes we make in our community aimed towards justice and goodness will be for the sake of education rather than manipulation. Aristotle argues in the *Politics* that education of the citizens is important for the stability of the constitution, stability which enables the best living possible for naturally political animals under non-ideal circumstances.[89] Further, for those who are worried that moral education may raise issues regarding autonomy, indoctrination, and manipulation, I

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[86] See Kenny (1993) who also argues that we ought to focus on building just societies. The approach here, which I take to be suggested by Aristotle, is similar to other approaches by political philosophers who make use of the same literature in social psychology to inform their views. This approach focuses not only on how we can change one's environment in order to offset the negative consequences of the cognitive biases most people have, but also on how one's environment can be altered to aid in the development of virtue rather than focusing. See Trout (2010) for an example of an approach that aims only at offsetting the negative effects of cognitive biases.

[87] Paul Lewis argues that recent work on moral education "converges with and supplements" Aristotle's account of moral development (2012, p. 156).

[88] See for example Haybron (2014, p. 252)

[89] *Politics*, 1263b37. See full argument in chapter five on Aristotle's *Politics*.

warn that we should emphasize education in our training. For education involves not the filling

of minds with dogma, but aiding in their development so that they may be able to reason well

and develop their abilities to read situations.[90] Presenting a full account of the best kind of moral

training – training that is effective without infringing on the development of autonomy despite its

use of indoctrination – is beyond the scope of this project and beyond the say of the moral

philosopher. How and why moral habituation can produce critical thinking in an adult is a matter

to be determined empirically. As Aristotle claims, some questions, like how we move from a

state of ignorance to a state of knowledge, will have to be determined by the natural scientists

(*EN*, VII.3, 1147b7-9). I only suggest here that finding ways to inculcate virtue does not have to

be paternalistic.

V. Conclusion

By acknowledging natural temperaments and non-ideal conditions in Aristotle's work, I

have shown that Aristotle's view of character is consistent with empirical findings and recent

accounts of character put forth by Doris and Miller. By looking to other texts in Aristotle, I have

supplemented Badhwar's recent work on finding textual evidence for actual and ordinary virtue.

While her account focuses on actual virtue, I add discussion of two types of ordinary virtue:

natural and modest. The ordinary person falls between a virtuous or vicious person. Her

character is partially formed insofar as she displays certain inclinations and she may have natural

virtues or vices or modest virtue, but she does not have robust traits. For those who have already

developed in less than ideal circumstances, we can aim at broadening and strengthening our

narrow traits so that they become more reliable and allows us to act well in a wider range of

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[90] See Kupfer (1998) for a wonderful discussion of this point. See also Annas (2011) and Sherman (1991) who include the development of one's reasoning in the moral development of children. I discuss this aspect of moral development in chapter three.

situations. For instance, I can work on developing my narrow trait of courage when facing physical threats so that I become courageous in moral situations such as standing up for those who are being unjustly treated. Robert Adams makes a similar suggestion in his work on virtue, concluding that the goal of moral education ought to be building up our modular virtues into more global ones (2006, p. 126).

A further result is that we need more than experience, good upbringing, and reflection to develop a good character. Rachana Kamtekar, for instance, argues that these elements seem to be inadequate given the failures recorded in the social psychology experiments. As examples, Kamtekar cites the willingness of participants to administer dangerously high voltage shocks to learners simply because an experimenter told them they must continue with the experiment and the seminarians' rushing past a dangerously ill person to give a lecture. She concludes that the evidence indicates our need to focus not only on the "foreground" of intellect and will, but on the "background" of decision-making – those processes that affect our decisions and behavior automatically and unconsciously (Kamtekar, 2010, p. 155). Kamtekar worries, however, that focusing on correcting biases will lead to the development of a neurotic personality (p. 156). What I have shown through a close examination of the ordinary person in Aristotle's works, however, is that it is no threat to virtue if it is one's social or political circumstances and situations that correct for one's biases rather than his or her individual effort. If, for example, the evidence indicates that it is opportunity and not character that is more responsible for a person's attempting suicide, eliminating opportunities for suicide, such as placing barriers above the railing on the Golden Gate Bridge,[91] is more effective than urging a suicidal person to reflect on

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[91] See Friend (2003). See also Trout (2010) for an extensive study of the ways we can use what we learn from cognitive psychologists to build better societies and increase individual well-being through policy changes.

whether his decision is too heavily influenced by his circumstances rather than a reflection of his actual desire to end his life.[92] Aristotle's recognition that the ideal constitution would include policies aimed at preventing bad behavior in fully virtuous citizens as well as his discussion of the modest virtues of the middle class both indicate the large extent a person's social and political circumstances play in her virtuous character without concluding that the dependence on circumstances undermines autonomy or virtue. Since Aristotle thinks that a good life requires not just individual virtue, but living in a good community with others, we also know that bettering our characters will involve bettering our circumstances. Recent work in psychology has provided evidence that is consistent with the Aristotelian view that our circumstances have a significant impact on our characters and choices. Though most of the time, one's character is a fragmented set of local traits, or global only if we consider the psychologically salient features of one's situation, it is still a character to the extent that it includes dispositions to act in predictable ways. The further task for moral psychologists is to use what we know about the role of situational cues in moral behavior in order to inform policies aimed at developing and maintaining virtuous citizens.

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[92] Encouraging efforts to eliminate opportunities for suicide does not mean that we must ignore appeals to the individual's intellect and will, but only that these may need supplementing or buttressing in cases where there is clear evidence they are overall insufficient to prevent behavior that is contrary to one's well-being. In the case of suicide prevention, therapy and other treatment would remain as important measures to prevent suicide. They would simply be supplemented by other measures aimed at eliminating opportunity for suicide.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

There are many significant factors, such as one's natural temperaments and upbringing, that are outside of one's control and affect one's character. This calls into question one's responsibility for one's character, and if we are not responsible for our characters, then it seems we cannot be held responsible for the many actions that stem from them.

In the preceding chapters, I have presented an argument that shows how a person can be responsible for her character and actions stemming from it despite the pervasiveness of character luck. To do this, I have constructed an account of character and responsibility from various passages in Aristotle's *EN*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics*. The latter two texts take into consideration the ordinary citizen who has not been met with good character luck, and they teach us much concerning the way contingent factors like one's natural temperament or upbringing can affect one's character and actions springing from it. I have argued that we can construct an account of responsibility from Aristotle's empirically-grounded texts, the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, that is broader than the standard account taken from the *EN* since it does not assume ideal conditions surrounding one's character development and maintenance. This view of responsibility takes into account not only control and moral awareness, but also one's capacity to develop virtue and perform virtuous actions. This capacity can be affected by one's natural temperaments, upbringing, or circumstances that make it either easier or more difficult to develop virtue or perform virtuous actions. I finally have shown how the account of the character of ordinary

people in Aristotle is consistent with contemporary findings in contemporary social psychology.

The work that has gone into this dissertation has resulted in several significant findings. In chapter two, I argued for three important conclusions concerning luck and moral luck. First, I have argued that lack of control and significance are necessary conditions for luck. My view refines and improves the vague notion of control assumed in the moral luck literature. For while most scholars simply identify control with the exercise of effective control, one scholar, Broncano-Berrocal, rightly acknowledges the epistemic aspect of control. I have refined this epistemic aspect in order to reflect the kind of epistemic control a person can exercise in relation to an event when she is able to make predictions or plans with respect to it.

Second, I argued that moral luck is a distinct type of luck since it related to responsibility. Many scholars, especially Stephen Hales, have argued that paradigmatic cases of moral luck cannot be accounted for under any of the general theories of luck. This problem is solved if we consider that moral luck is a special kind of luck since it involves what an agent can reasonably be expected to predict. In other words, moral luck is perspectival; it considers the perspective of the agent who makes plans or predictions in relation to some event or circumstances and who rarely operates with full knowledge. So while an event might have been likely to occur, it still may be a matter of luck relative to what an agent could have reasonably been expected to know.

Third, I have shown how character luck is a special type of moral luck since it involves fortune with respect to one's natural temperaments and social inheritances. Some instances of luck include those events that are unpredictable, which leaves a person unable to plan in relation to them. By contrast, the general conditions surrounding one's life, such as one's natural temperaments or social inheritances, are not matters where one is totally unable to make plans or predications. While we cannot predict or choose which temperaments or social inheritances with

which we will be born or which will develop over time on their own, we can make plans in relation to them. For example, knowing that one is naturally shy can help a person develop a pro-social virtue by pushing her to overcome her shyness when it comes to certain virtuous acts. Further, it may be predictable which temperaments develop as we age and so a person can develop virtue in a way that will offset the physical changes that occur over time. Since these cases are ones that are not outside of one's epistemic control, i.e., one can make plans with respect to them, they are matters of fortune, not luck. Still, the various ways one's natural temperaments and social inheritances can interact are not as predictable. So, the interaction between one's natural temperaments and social inheritances is a matter of character luck.

In chapters three, four, and five, I compared the *EN* account of character and responsibility to his *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, finding evidence for a view of character and responsibility that is more empirically adequate and that can apply to more people, one that emphasizes contingent factors such as one's age or circumstances rather than what is "up to us." Since the *EN* is written for an audience that Aristotle assumes has been met with good moral luck – they are free, Greek male citizens who are in the best position to become virtuous since they have the right temperaments and upbringings – he ignores cases where a person may lack the capacity to become virtuous or whose capacity is limited on account of bad character luck. By contrast, in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, his emphasis is on these cases since he is writing about a more general population. Though Aristotle does not explicitly state his view of character and responsibility in these texts, I have constructed such a view using pieces from all three texts, especially the more empirically-grounded texts, i.e., the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. In chapter four, I focused on the moral luck concerning one's natural temperaments in the *Rhetoric* – that is, temperaments with which one is born or temperaments that develop naturally over time, on

account of physical changes that take place in relation to age. In chapter five, I focused on the

moral luck concerning one's social inheritances in both the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, that is, one's

upbringing, community, and the conventional morality of one's time. I have argued that, taken

together, the *EN*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics* develop Aristotle's view of the character of ordinary

people. This view acknowledges and respects the pervasive role that moral luck plays in the

development and maintenance of character.

 As I have gathered evidence about the ordinary person, in chapter four I have also teased

out an account of responsibility that takes into account one's capacity for developing virtue and

performing virtuous actions. In Aristotle's descriptive accounts of the various temperaments that

accompany age in the *Rhetoric*, he uses normative language that indicates a varying level of

responsibility according to age. I have argued that this variation is a function of the amount of

life experience a person has had which affects her access to moral knowledge. For example, an

older person is held more accountable for his behavior than a young person because he should

have known more given his life experience. In some cases, however, one's life experience is not

enough to develop moral knowledge. Because our understanding requires experience, and our

experience depends on the kind of environment in which we develop, we do not always have

access to those truths on account of unfortunate situational factors. In chapter five, I considered

the effect that one's circumstances have on one's character development and maintenance,

showing how Aristotle's view in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* indicates that one's community can

impede on one's moral understanding in a way that limits one's capacity to develop and maintain

virtue. For example, in both the *Rhetoric* and *Politics*, Aristotle mentions that having a lot of

wealth can affect one's moral awareness since it causes one to base one's value judgments on

wealth. Further, he claims that having a moderate amount of wealth makes one better able to

listen to reason because those with too much or too little wealth think about money too much. These points indicate one's capacity for virtue, and thus responsibility, can be affected by circumstances.

In addition to constructing the account of the ordinary person, I have brought together much evidence in Aristotle that indicates his account of full virtue does not present an impossible standard. In other words, full virtue as Aristotle describes it is possible for "creatures like us." For one, many of his individual definitions of the various virtues are quite narrow, which contrasts with the claim made by situationists that Aristotle understood the virtues to be global traits. Thus, his view of the virtues in the *EN* consistent with the situationist view that traits of character are narrow. Further, I have also found significant evidence in the *Politics* that the fully virtuous person is neither infallible nor the possessor of traits that are independent of his circumstances. Both of these points are evident in Aristotle's description of the ideal constitution. First, he claims that the ideal constitution, which assumes all citizens are fully virtuous, will include laws to punish those who commit serious offenses, like adultery, an act which Aristotle claims in the *EN* a virtuous person should never commit. So, it is not the case that the fully virtuous person will never err. Second, Aristotle includes provisions for preventing a fully virtuous person from doing wrong, indicating that full virtue is not only dependent on good social or political structures to develop but also to be maintained. This is consistent with the findings in social psychology that a person's character is situationally sensitive; local traits depend on particular situations for their stability.

The accounts of character and responsibility I construct are significant in two ways. First, they are developed to an extent that has not been done before in Aristotelian scholarship. Second, they show that we can construct an account of character from Aristotle's empirically-grounded

texts that is consistent with recent findings in social psychology that a person's behavior is more significantly determined by minor situational factors rather than character. For the ordinary person develops a character that is fragmented and far less stable than a person of full virtue. This means that her behavior is inconsistent across situations; she will behave virtuously in some situations, but not other. This is especially the case when there are competing values. For example, in the chapter on the young person in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he claims they desire the noble but are also driven by pleasure. So, they may not always pursue the noble when their appetites urge them to pursue some pleasure instead. In the empirical literature, this is consistent with the results from Darley and Batson's study on seminarians. This study has been critiqued insofar as it involves competing values rather than failure to express one value in action. In other words, it was not that the seminarians simply failed to act when a person in need demanded attention, but that they failed to choose correctly between helping a stranger and making an appointment. It can be difficult even for the fully virtuous person to juggle competing moral demands, but it is very difficult for the ordinary person who lacks a unified conception of the good and she may find herself acting in surprising ways she would not have predicted.

Further, Aristotle's remarks on the ordinary person in the *Rhetoric* are consistent with many studies in social psychology that indicate that mood is a strong determinant for behavior. In particular, these studies showed a strong correlation between a good mood and helping behavior. In the opening chapter of book II of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle similarly claims that a person's mood has a significant effect on her decision-making. For example, he claims that being in a good mood will make a person more merciful. So he spends the ten chapters that follow discussing ways in which an orator might arouse certain emotions in order to make his audience more persuadable. That Aristotle holds this view is quite surprising given the view that is

traditionally ascribed to him that character is independent of the situation one is in and a larger determinant of behavior.

My conclusion that Aristotle's moral theory is empirically adequate is admittedly limited as I have focused only on the evidence presented by situationists and have only shown that this evidence is consistent with Aristotle's view of psychology. Further work would need to be done to fully establish once and for all that Aristotle's moral theory is empirically adequate. For instance, we should go beyond the situationist literature and consider other evidence in psychology and neuroscience that might be incompatible with Aristotle's views of human psychology. Here I have only followed others in focusing on the situationist literature. The literature outside situationism is certainly vast and so it may be the case that there is evidence in that other literature that falsifies the account of responsibility I have developed by ruling out the possibility that humans can develop virtues, even ones that are narrow and situationally dependent for their development and maintenance. Other evidence may even support hard determinism. Some versions of virtue ethics will be more vulnerable to empirical findings than others. Exemplarism is especially vulnerable since it requires there actually exist exemplars of particular virtues. I have so far only addressed one prominent worry. Looking at other evidence will be important to do in the future as I continue in this project.

In sum, I have made seven important arguments in this dissertation. First, I have refined the epistemic aspect of the definition of control which is important for establishing that lack of control is a necessary condition for luck. Other definitions of control are too limited and do not show that lack of control is necessary for luck. Second, I have shown how moral luck is distinct from other types of luck. Third, I have shown how character luck is a unique instance of moral luck. Fourth, I have developed an empirically adequate account of the character of ordinary

people from Aristotle's works. Fifth, I have developed a corresponding account of responsibility that addresses the problem of character luck. Sixth, I have shown that Aristotle's account of full virtue, though difficult to achieve, does not set an unrealistic or impossible standard. Lastly, I have shown the extent to which the account of ordinary character and actual and modest virtue in Aristotle is consist with recent findings on character.

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VITA

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