

Compulsion and Voluntary Action in the Eudemian Ethics

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In this paper I wish to examine Aristotle's views on compulsion and voluntary action in the *Eudemian Ethics* II.6-9. This topic, like the *Eudemian Ethics* generally, has received little attention from scholars. Even the fifteen papers of the fifth Symposium Aristotelicum devoted to the *Eudemian Ethics*¹ have nothing to say about its treatment of voluntary action. And while the subject is helpfully and interestingly discussed in Anthony Kenny's book on Aristotle's philosophy of action,² his account also distorts Aristotle's views on a number of important points.

As I hope to show, the position adopted by Aristotle is of interest, differing significantly from what we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will begin with an examination of those conditions in Aristotle's definition of voluntary action which are especially important for the understanding of his views on compulsion. Then I will attempt to explain Aristotle's position as it is found in the main discussion of compulsion at the end of Book II, chapter 8. Finally, I will note some difficulties arising from Aristotle's treatment and explain how they are avoided in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

I

Let A be any agent and X any action. Then according to the *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter EE),

- (1) A Xed voluntarily if and only if
- (i) A Xed
 - (ii) It was in A's power ($\epsilon\phi' \chi\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$) not to X
 - (iii) A Xed with knowledge
 - (iv) A Xed through himself ($\delta\iota' \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$).³

In order to understand Aristotle's views on compulsion we must understand (ii) and (iv).

To begin with, we can replace (iv) with

(iv') A was the cause ($\alpha\lambda\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$) of his Xing, where the sort of "cause" in question is Aristotle's efficient cause. For Aristotle, the statement that X occurred through or on account of ($\delta\iota\alpha$) Y is synonymous with the statement that Y is the cause of X.⁴

It is also clear from 1226b30-32 that by (ii) is meant

(ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X.

The same passage shows that Aristotle intends his definition to cover failures to act as well as positive actions. Making the obvious changes we get

(2) A not-Xed voluntarily if and only if

- (i) A not-Xed
- (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X
- (iii) A not-Xed with knowledge
- (iv') A was the cause of his not-Xing.

In what follows I will be referring mainly to (1).

II.6 introduces the notion of the "proper origin" ($\kappa\upsilon\phi\omicron\lambda\alpha$, $\alpha\lambda\chi\eta$) of an action. This is the efficient cause of an action which is the *first* efficient cause of the action. That is, nothing causes the proper origin to cause the action.

That the proper origin of an action is an uncaused cause of the action is made clear by Aristotle's description of it as that from which *first* arises the change which is the action (1222b21) and his comparison of the proper origin of an action with mathematical principles ($\alpha\lambda\eta\lambda\alpha\tau$) which are said to be principles only because they themselves lack a cause ($\alpha\lambda\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$) (1222b39-41).

II.6 links together the following notions (where Xing is an action):

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X
- (iv') A was the cause of his Xing
- (v) A was the proper origin of his Xing
- (vi) A Xed voluntarily.

First, Aristotle asserts⁵

- (3) (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (at or during t) (and (i) A Xed at or during t) \rightarrow A was the proper origin of his Xing (at or during t).

(Hereafter I will drop the time references).

Secondly, Aristotle claims⁶

- (4) (v) A was the proper origin of his Xing \rightarrow (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (and (i) A Xed).

(3) and (4) entail

- (5) (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (and (i)

A Xed) if and only if (v) A was the proper origin of his Xing.

Aristotle further asserts⁷

- (6) (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (and (i) A Xed) if and only if (iv') A was the cause of his Xing.
- Then at the close of the chapter Aristotle says that⁸

- (7) (vi) A Xed voluntarily \rightarrow (iv') A was the cause of Xing and

(8) A Xed voluntarily \rightarrow A was not the cause of his Xing. EE, unlike the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE), does not distinguish the "non-voluntary" as a third class of actions. Hence, since in EE any action is voluntary or involuntary, from (7) and (8) we can derive

- (9) (vi) A Xed voluntarily if and only if (iv') A was the cause of his Xing

and

- (10) A Xed involuntarily if and only if A was not the cause of his Xing.

From (5), (6) and (9) we can infer

- (11) (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (and (i) A Xed) iff (v) A was the proper origin of his Xing iff (iv') A was the cause of his Xing iff (vi) A Xed voluntarily.

Hence, in chapter 6 Aristotle commits himself to the view that

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X (and (i) A Xed)
- (iv') A was the cause of his Xing
- (v) A was the proper origin of his Xing
- (vi) A Xed voluntarily

are all true and false together. Any situation where one obtains is a situation where all obtain, and in any case where one does not obtain the others do not obtain either.

O course

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X

withou

- (i) A Xed

is not false whenever the others are false, for in many cases when it was in A's power to X or not he will not have Xed, and then (iv'), (v) and (vi) will be false. But then their counterparts with 'not X' substituted for 'X' will be true.⁹ And (ii') differs from the others in ascribing an ability to A rather than asserting that something occurred. It says in effect that the agent could have done other than he did.

(ii') does not mean merely that either A had the power to X, or had the power to not X. Rather it asserts that he had the power to X, and he had the power to not X.¹⁰

If we ask Aristotle under what conditions he believes it is in an agent's power to X or to not X, EE has nothing to say beyond the requirements that the agent must be the proper origin and cause of the Xing or the not Xing. If we look for help elsewhere in Aristotle's writings, *Metaphysics* IX, chapters 2 and 5 look relevant. In those chapters Aristotle distinguishes rational and non-rational powers (*δυνάμεις*). A nonrational power is always a power to do *one* thing.¹¹ For instance, fire's power to heat is not a power to do anything else. But a rational power such as the art of medicine is a power to produce contraries as the doctor's knowledge enables him to harm as well as heal (cf. *Phys.* 251a28-30, NE 1129a11-16). Hence, Aristotle says, when an agent of the first sort meets an appropriate patient (and any other necessary conditions are satisfied apart from the agent's decisively wanting to X), then the agent acts and the patient suffers. But because a rational power is the power to do contraries, and an agent cannot produce contrary effects at the same time, it is not true that whenever an agent with a rational power meets an appropriate patient (and any other necessary conditions are satisfied apart from the agent's decisively wanting to X), the agent acts and the patient suffers. If the mere "meeting" of such an agent and patient sufficed to result in the agent's acting, the agent would perform contrary actions at once, which is impossible. Hence, something else must determine what the agent does—a decisive want or choice.¹²

It seems natural to describe the difference between the doctor and the fire by saying that—given the appropriate subject and circumstances—it is in the doctor's power to cure or harm while it is not then in the fire's power to heat or not heat (cf. *Phys.* 255a9-10). Then it will also be true to say that it was in the doctor's power to cure or not, or to harm or not.

Perhaps we can say that when it is in an agent's power (*ἐφ' αὐτῷ*) to X or not X, there is a rational power (*δύναμις*) in the agent such that the mere "presence" of the appropriate patient and circumstances does not suffice for the actualization of the power. Rather, in standard cases, that will be determined by the agent's wanting or choosing to X or to not X. It will not be in an agent's power to X or not X when there is an irrational power in the agent to X, or an irrational power to not X. Then when a patient of the appropriate sort meets the agent, the agent has no control over what it does. Either it must X or it must not X, and if it is a person then whichever occurs will be determined independently of any of its wants or choices.

However, this interpretation of

(ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X

must be divorced from Aristotle's notion of a rational power, for it is not the case that whenever (ii') is satisfied the power in question is what Aristotle would call a rational power—literally a power with an account or definition (*διθρομὸς μετὰ λόγου*). An example is the power of the doctor to heal or harm. This power, for Aristotle, consists in the doctor's knowledge of health which will be expressed by the definition of health. And it is because the definition at the same time reveals the contrary of health that the doctor's power is a power to do contraries.

Obviously nothing of the sort is connected with many types of action to which the definition of voluntary action—and hence (ii')—must apply. Often an agent will voluntarily walk somewhere when it was in his power to walk there or not, but there is no definition the knowledge of which plays some role analogous to the role of the definition of health in the doctor's ability to heal or harm.

It is not clear what Aristotle would say about walking (along with many other examples). *Meta.* IX's distinction between rational and non-rational powers looks like it is meant to be exhaustive, but *De Int.* 22b36-23a6 explicitly recognizes that some non-rational powers are powers to do contraries. While the ability to walk cannot be classified as a rational power, it is not the case that, like *Meta.* IX's non-rational powers, the mere presence of the appropriate patient (here the agent) together with other necessary conditions (apart from wanting to walk) suffices to make it true that the agent walks. For the agent may nevertheless want not to walk and not walk.

It is this last consideration that is important to us, and henceforth I will use the expression 'rational power' to refer to whatever satisfies this sort of condition. That is,

(12) A possesses a *rational power* to X at t if and only if
(A) the appropriate subject and any other necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ for Xing (distinct from decisively wanting to X) are present at t and their presence alone is insufficient to make it true that A Xes at t; and

(B)(i) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A Xes at t, and

(ii) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to not X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A does not X at t.

We can then say

(13) (ii') It was in A's power to X or not X at t if and only if A possessed a rational power to X at t.

It is important to understand that (ii') does not ascribe a general ability to X or not X to the agent, an ability which the agent possesses even in the absence of the appropriate subject or other necessary conditions for Xing. Rather it is meant to ascribe to the agent the ability to X or not on a particular occasion when those conditions hold. Aristotle believes that the definition of some specific power to X must detail the conditions that must be satisfied if the agent is to possess the power to X (*Meta.* 1048a10-21). Hence, when any of these conditions fails to be present the agent lacks the power to X or not X (cf. *Phys.* 251b1-3). Of course, even when one of the necessary conditions is absent, it may be true that the agent possesses the power: to X or not X when the appropriate subject and N₁...N_n are present. The point is that when any of these necessary conditions are absent, the agent does not then possess the power to X or not X.

Now consider

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing and

(v) A was the proper origin of his Xing.

An agent will be the cause or proper origin of an action when his want or choice causes the action. In EE, Aristotle considers the four internal efficient causes of action to be choice and the three types of wanting (*ὁ ρεξις*)—rational wish (*βουλήσις*), *θυμός*,¹³ and desire (*ἐπιθυμία*). When choice occurs it is the outcome of a wish for something and deliberation as to how to realize what is wished, and in this case wish and deliberation can also be said to cause the action, although choice is the immediate cause (cf. EE 1226b19-20, NE 1139a31-33, *De An.* 433a17-20). So we can say: when the agent's choice, wish or desire causes the action, conditions (iv') and (v) are satisfied: the agent causes the action and is the proper origin of the action. (If Aristotle in EE considers reason (*λόγος*) to be an efficient cause of action at times independently of its role in deliberation, let it too be covered by the generic term 'wanting').

According to *De Anima* III.9-11, certain "parts" of the soul are efficient causes of action. I assume that, for Aristotle, a man's being the cause of his action is nothing over and above his soul's being the efficient cause of his action. It seems plausible to make the same assumption for EE. Hence, the soul is the cause of action when a choice or want of the agent causes the action.

But does Aristotle believe that the soul's causing an action involves any causation over and above a want of the agent causing

the action? If so, such a further fact would have to consist in the soul causing the want which causes the action.

The interpretation of

(v) A was the proper origin of his Xing depends on the answer to this question. If no further causation is involved, then an agent's being the proper origin of an action will consist in his desire to X being uncaused, or in his wish to X being uncaused. If the soul's causing the action involves the further fact of the soul's causing the desire or wish, then an agent's being the proper origin of an action will consist in the fact that nothing causes the soul of the agent to cause the desire or wish which in turn causes the action.

Either position has serious problems. The first would have to defend the incredible claim that the wishes and desires that cause our voluntary actions are never caused by anything. On the second, since Aristotle considers, e.g., the appetitive part of the soul to be a capacity to have occurrent desires,¹⁴ he would have to say that a capacity to desire causes—unaided—an occurrent desire. But how can a disposition activate itself unaided? What could that be? And what would explain the fact that at certain times the disposition activates itself while at other times it does not? Nothing, for the appetitive soul's self-activation must be uncaused and hence inexplicable.

There is no evidence for the second interpretation, but there is some evidence against it which also supports the first interpretation. In *De Anima* Aristotle holds that the appetitive part of the soul—*τὸ ὁρεκτικόν*—is moved by the object of desire, and in turn moves the animal (cf. *De Motu Anim.* 700b35-700a1, *Phys.* 253a15-19). But Aristotle's description of this sequence leaves no room for the soul's causing its wanting of the desired object. If such causation did occur, it would have to be the effect of *τὸ ὁρεκτικόν*'s being moved by the desired object. Then we would have the following sequence of cause and effect:

- (A) the desired object
- (B) the soul's causing its ωan (= the ω↓ s being moved)
- (C) the soul's wanting to X
- (D) the animal's Xing.

But Aristotle's description of the sequence not only omits (B) but excludes it (433b17-18): "What is moved [*τὸ ὁρεκτικόν*] is moved *in so far as* it wants, and wanting is a motion." The italicized phrase shows that *τὸ ὁρεκτικόν*'s being moved is nothing but its wanting to X. Hence, in Aristotle's view, (B) does not occur when the agent acts.

Since he was well aware that many involuntary acts occur because of the agent's ignorance, he must have realized that with (9) he was committing himself to the view that in such a case the agent is not the cause of the action.

Secondly, when Aristotle restates his definition of voluntary action in II.10, he says (1226b30-32): "one voluntarily does or does not do what is in one's power to do or not if it is *through himself and not through ignorance* (*δι' αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ δι' ἄγνοιαν*) that one does or does not do something." The italicized phrase suggests that Aristotle may consider (iv')—A's being the cause of his action—and his ignorance being a cause of his action to be mutually exclusive alternatives. Hence, whenever A is the cause of his action—(iv'), A must act with knowledge—(iii).¹⁷

For Aristotle,

(iii) A Xed with knowledge is satisfied when the agent acts with knowledge of the end, instrument and subject, i.e. the patient, of the action (1225b1-5). If A gave B a liquid without realizing that it was wine, A gave B wine involuntarily—he was ignorant of the instrument of the action. If A gave B a drug hoping to cure him and without realizing that it would kill him, then A was ignorant of the end of the action and killed B involuntarily. If, in that case, A did not know B was the president, then he was ignorant of the subject of the action and killed the president involuntarily.

Before proceeding, I must point out that, despite the fact that Aristotle's definition of voluntary action—by the inclusion of

- (iii) A Xed with knowledge—
- makes (iii) a necessary condition for
- (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X

and (iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

EE does not in fact make knowledge a necessary condition for voluntary action. When Aristotle discusses (iii) in II.9 it turns out to amount to the following:

- (iii') Either
 - (a) A Xed with non-accidental knowledge or
 - (b) (1) A Xed with non-accidental potential knowledge & (2) A failed to exercise his knowledge because of negligence or pleasure or pain, or
 - (c) (1) A Xed without actual or potential non-accidental knowledge & (2) what A failed to know he should have known or was easy to know & (3) A failed to have knowledge because of negligence or pleasure or pain.

Since in *De Anima* a soul's or an agent's causing an action is nothing over and above (C) causing (D), we have some grounds for saying that, in EE too, an agent or an agent's soul being the cause of an action X consists in the agent's (occurent) wanting to X causing the Xing. So I understand

(v) A was the proper origin of his Xing to mean that the Xing was caused by A's wanting to X and A's wanting to X was caused by nothing.

The difficulty of this latter claim may, perhaps, be slightly mitigated by noting that for Aristotle the assertion that X is uncaused does not entail that there are no factors present that would consider to play some role in *partly* explaining X, or that are necessary for X. He holds that wanting to X is *the* cause of Xing while recognizing that Xing can occur when A wants to X only if an appropriate subject and other necessary conditions are present (*Meta.* 1048a15-21). Hence, when Aristotle denies that the wanting to X is caused he need not be committing himself to the absurdity that no conditions of the latter sort are necessary if the wanting is to occur.¹⁵

So far, then, I have suggested that

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing holds when A's wanting to X caused his Xing. Further, since (iv') entails

(v) A was the proper origin of his Xing,

(iv') asserts or entails that the wanting to X which caused the Xing must itself have been caused by nothing.

Now, it was earlier pointed out that Aristotle considers all of the following statements to be true or false together:

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or not X (and (i) A Xed)
- (iv') A was the cause of his Xing
- (v) A was the proper cause of his Xing
- (vi) A Xed voluntarily.

But if so, (ii') and (iv') are sufficient for (vi)—A's voluntarily Xing. How, then, can Aristotle consider (iii) A Xed with knowledge

to be a necessary condition of voluntary action? For if (ii') and (iv') alone are sufficient for (vi), (iii) is apparently not necessary for (vi).

The answer may be that Aristotle considers (iii) to be a necessary condition of (iv') and (ii'). (It could not be necessary for (i)—A Xed). That Aristotle does wish to make (iii) a necessary condition of (iv') is suggested by two passages. First, we have already seen that at the close of EE II.6¹⁶ Aristotle commits himself to

- (9) (vi) A Xed voluntarily if and only if (iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

A has non-accidental knowledge of a perceptible object S just in case he knows that the object is S (where either proper names or descriptions may be substituted for 'S') (cf. *De An.* 418a20-23, 425a24-27, *An. Post.* 71b9-10, 74a25-32). A has actual knowledge of S just in case he is perceiving it and recognizes it and is thinking of it as S. He has potential knowledge of S just in case, when within perceptual range of S, he can have actual knowledge of it whenever he wishes (*De An.* 417b19-28).

For Aristotle, then, given the satisfaction of the other necessary conditions, A acts voluntarily if either (b) or (c) in (iii') is satisfied. While we would say that in either case the agent does not possess knowledge of the sort required for voluntary action, Aristotle counts them as instances of voluntary action. Hence Aristotle is not in general necessary for voluntary action in EE.

Therefore, only when neither of the conditions (b) or (c) are satisfied does Aristotle consider knowledge a necessary condition for voluntary action, and hence a necessary condition for

(i') It is necessary for A to know X or to not X

and

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

So my discussion of why Aristotle considers knowledge a necessary condition for (ii') and (iv') will be restricted to cases where both (b) and (c) fail to hold.

Now, suppose A voluntarily killed the man standing before him, but that, unknown to him, the man standing before him was his father. Then A, we will suppose, involuntarily killed his father. A is the cause of his killing of the man standing before him, and therefore his wanting to kill the man caused his killing of the man. Aristotle must accept that A's killing of the man is the same action as A's killing of his father.¹⁸ But it would seem that he must deny that A's wanting to kill the man caused his killing of his father, for otherwise he would have caused an involuntary action, contrary to

(9) (vi) A Xed voluntarily if and only if (iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

This is not explained away by noting that for Aristotle an efficient cause is a kind of explanation and explanation contexts are known to be nonextensional. For the statement that A's wanting to kill the man explains his killing of his father is true, not false. Suppose I asked "Why did A kill his father?" and was told "Because A wanted to kill the man standing before him who, unknown to him, was his father." Surely I could not say that I have some understanding of why A killed his father. If so, A's wanting to kill the man standing before him explains why A killed his father. Of course, A's wanting to kill the man is not the whole explanation

of why A killed his father, but nobody supposes that an assertion that X explains Y is true only if X provides the entire explanation of Y.

Aristotle might say that we must understand what, in his view, the conditions are which must be satisfied in order for

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

to be true. What is required is the truth of

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X

where the *same* description must be substituted for both occurrences of X and 'A's wanting to X' is an *opaque* context. Further, the want which causes the Xing must be an occurrent want which can cause the Xing only given the appropriate subject and circumstances.

This might provide some support for Aristotle's view that

(iii) A Xed with knowledge

is necessary for

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

For it could be said that it is only if A was aware of the fact that it was Xing that he was doing (or about to do), that

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X

could be true.¹⁹ When an agent Xes voluntarily, he must X because he wanted to do *precisely* X (opaque). Apart from deviant causal chains, if A had been unaware that the subject was *the man*, it would not have been A's wanting to kill *the man* that would have caused his killing of the man. Rather, some different want—say, his wanting to kill the object behind the bush—would have caused his killing of the man. Thus, it was true that A's wanting to kill *the man* caused him to kill the man only because A was aware that the object was the man. And because A was unaware that the object was his father, it could not be true that A's wanting to kill *his father* caused him to kill his father. Since we are requiring that the same description replace both occurrences of X, we could conclude that

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

is not true in this case, i.e. A did not cause his killing of his father, and therefore did not kill his father voluntarily.

But this account of why

(iii) A Xed with knowledge

is necessary for

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

faces a serious objection. Aristotle believes, in EE, that there are cases of voluntary action when condition (a) of (iii') is false while (b) or (c) is true. (See above, p. 13). Suppose that solely because of gross negligence, A fails to realize that he is poisoning B when he gives him a drug and that A should have known this would happen if he were to give B the drug. Then condition (iii')(c) is satisfied.

Since Aristotle wants *some* cases of voluntary action to be covered by (iii')(c) he must believe that there are some such cases where the other conditions for voluntary action are satisfied. Suppose this is such a case. Then

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing
must be satisfied, i.e. it must be true that
A caused his poisoning of B.

But it may well be that

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X

is not satisfied because A did not in fact want to poison B. In which case, we cannot explicate (iv') in terms of (14) because in the present case (iv') holds and (14) does not.

How, then, do we explicate (iv') in the present example where A negligently poisons B? As I said before, it seems clear that, for Aristotle, an agent's causing his action cannot consist in anything other than his soul's causing the action. And *De Anima* indicates that the soul's causing an action consists in an occurrent want of the agent causing the action. So in order for

A caused his poisoning of B

to hold in the above case we need a want of A's acting as a cause of his poisoning of B. There will be no difficulty in locating such a want—say, A's wanting to give B the drug.

The truth of

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

then, does not require the truth of

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X.

It only requires the truth of

(14') A's wanting to Y caused him to X

where Y may or may not be identical to X. This seems to me to be the only plausible alternative to (14) as an explication of

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing.

But this account is also open to objection. It will result in (iv')'s being satisfied in cases of involuntary action, whereas, as we saw, Aristotle asserts that

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

is true if and only if

(vi) A Xed voluntarily

is true.

Consider the example mentioned earlier where A involuntarily killed his father. Since the action was involuntary and (iv') and (vi) are always true or false together, A should not be the cause of his action of killing his father. But

(14') A's wanting to Y caused him to X

is satisfied, since A's wanting to kill B^o standing before him caused his killing of his father. Hence,

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing
will be satisfied when

(vi) A Xed voluntarily

is not, contrary to Aristotle's view that they are always true or false together.

So both of the plausible interpretations of (iv') appear to founder. If we adopt

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X

then there are cases, in Aristotle's view, where the agent acts voluntarily even though he is not the cause of his action. If we adopt (14'), there are cases where the agent is the cause of his action even though he acts involuntarily.

I will interpret

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

in terms of

(14') A's wanting to Y caused him to X

where Y may or may not be identical with X. Then how can knowledge be necessary for the satisfaction (iv') when both (b) and (c) of (iii') (above, p. 13) fail to be satisfied? We have already seen that this is explicable if Y is identical with X in (14'). And it seems reasonable to hold that in cases of voluntary action where (b) and (c) of (iii') are unsatisfied, the Xing is voluntary only if

(14) A's wanting to X caused him to X.

So the previous explanation which appealed to (14) can be retained after all.

We saw before that

(iv') A was the cause of his Xing

entails

(v) A was the proper origin of his Xing.

We now understand this to mean that A's wanting to Y—referred to in (14)—is uncaused. But Aristotle recognizes that this desire—the proximate cause of A's Xing—may on some occasions be caused by another want. A may want to Z, deliberate about how to achieve this, decide that Y is the best procedure, want to do Y and do X. Then A's wanting to Y was caused by A's wanting to Z.

In order to handle this case, Aristotle need only add that if A's wanting to Y—referred to in (14)—was caused, then for some Z A's wanting to Z caused A's wanting to Y and A's wanting to Z was uncaused.

So,

(15) A is ϕ e cause of his Xing if and only if:

- (a) A's wanting to Y caused him to X (where Y may or may not be identical with X), and
 (b) If A's wanting to Y was caused, then for some Z, A's wanting to Z caused A's wanting to Y and A's wanting to Z was uncaused.

However, (15) is still not enough. For if A's wanting to X was uncontrollable or irresistible, then even though (15a) and (15b) are satisfied, Aristotle cannot allow that the agent Xed voluntarily, for (ii') It was in A's power to X or to not X will not then be true. But if (ii') is not satisfied, then A Xed involuntarily.

In order to keep (ii') and

- (iv') A was the cause of his Xing

together, Aristotle must restrict the kind of wanting which can cause a voluntary action. And we can see from 1225a25-27 that he would make the restriction by saying that the wanting which causes voluntary action must be "natural" ($\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\tau\iota$). Aristotle does nothing to explain this notion apart from making it clear that a want cannot be both natural and uncontrollable. But let us understand the wanting referred to in (15a) to be "natural" wanting, however Aristotle would have explicated the notion. Then actions on uncontrollable wants fail (15), and the resulting actions will not be caused by the agent. Hence, (iv') will be false along with (ii').

We have seen that Aristotle considers

- (iii) A Xed with knowledge

to be a necessary condition for

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or not X,²⁰

when conditions (b) and (c) of (iii') fail to be satisfied. Suppose A killed his father involuntarily because he did not realize that the man standing before him was his father. Then \sim (iii): A did not kill his father with knowledge, i.e. he lacked knowledge of the subject of the action. Hence, Aristotle must say, it was not in A's power to kill his father or not kill his father.

On our ordinary understanding of something's being in an agent's power that is false. If I had witnessed the scene with A and his father, before the killing occurred I could have truly said "It is in A's power to kill his father or not kill his father."

Perhaps this shows merely that our translations of $\epsilon\phi'\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ is inadequate. It is also sometimes translated as what is "up to" an agent. But this does not help us with the present problem, for while witnessing the scene with A and his father I could also have truly said "It is up to A whether he kills his father or does not kill his father." Something can be up to an agent to do or not, just as it can be in his power to do or not, without his realizing it.

However, I believe we do get a more plausible claim if $\epsilon\phi'\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ is translated as what is "in one's control." "Killing his father or not killing his father was in A's control" could at least plausibly be said to be false in the present case just because A was unaware of the fact that the man before him was his father.

However, it is not clear that A acted through negligence and clearly changed if we learn that A acted through negligence and should have known that the man standing before him was his father. But in that case (iii')(c) is satisfied and hence Aristotle will count A's killing of his father as a voluntary action. But then (ii') should be true, not false.

Still, there is another reason for preferring "what is in one's control" over "what is in one's power" as a translation of $\epsilon\phi'\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$. Aristotle says, concerning fire, that it is not $\epsilon\pi'\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ to move upwards (*Phys.* 255a9-10). While moving upwards is not in fire's control, it is something fire has the power to do.

While the issue is hardly settled, I will replace

- (ii') It was in A's power to X or not to X

with

- (ii'') Xing or not Xing was in A's control.

Can the previous explanation of (ii') in terms of the definition of a rational power accommodate the point that when

- (iii) A Xed with knowledge

(along with (iii')(b) and (iii')(c)) is false, (ii'') is false?

I believe that it can if, once again, we set aside deviant causal chains. Recall that

- (12) A possesses a rational power to X at t if and only if

(A) the appropriate subject and any other necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ for Xing (distinct from decisively wanting to X) are present at t and their presence alone is insufficient to make it true that A Xes at t; and

(B) (i) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A Xes at t, and

(i) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to not X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A does not X at t.

I am now saying that

- (16) (ii'') Xing or not Xing was in A's control at t if and only if, at t, A possessed a rational power to X.

In our example where A involuntarily killed his father, condi-

tion (12A) is satisfied: the appropriate subject (A's father) and any other necessary conditions apart from A's wanting to kill his father are present. But condition (B) is not satisfied. For suppose the situation with A and his father to be just as it was with the one difference that A had a decisive want to not kill his father. In the circumstances the presence of that want would not suffice to make it true that A does not kill his father at *t*. For being unaware that the man standing before him was his father, the presence of that want would have had no effect on his action, and he would have killed his father anyway. Hence, (B) is not satisfied because (Bii) is not true. So we can say: killing his father or not killing his father was not in A's control because he did not know the man was his father.

Of course, it is not difficult to imagine non-standard cases where the agent is such that his wanting not to kill his father would result in his not killing his father.

My interpretation of (ii') in (16) and of (iv') in (15) shows clearly why Aristotle considers digestion, aging and other natural processes not to be voluntary actions despite the fact that their origin (*ἀρχή*) is *in us*.²¹ They are not under our control because neither clause (A) nor clause (B) in (12) is satisfied. For example, our aging occurs independently of whether we want to or not. Hence, there will be a set of necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ which together with the presence of the appropriate subject are sufficient to make it the case that the subject ages. So (A) is not satisfied. Likewise (B) is not satisfied. Whatever $N_1 \dots N_n$ might be, if their presence together with the presence of the subject is insufficient to make it true that A does not age, the addition of A's wanting not to age will not make it the case that A does not age.

Natural processes such as aging, then, are not in our control because they occur independently of what we want.

For the same reason, A will not be the cause of his growing old, for even if he wants to grow old, it will not be the case that A's wanting to grow old will cause him to grow old. Nor will any of his other wants cause this effect. (15a), then, is not satisfied and we cannot say that A is the cause of his growing old.

This indicates that Aristotle wishes to distinguish the person A from his soul and nature (cf. 1223a10-12, 1226a23-26, 1219b27-1220a2). For the nutritive soul which is a part of A's soul and nature does, e.g., cause A's digestion. Since Aristotle denies that A is the cause of the digestion, he must wish to distinguish A from his entire soul and nature. In NE a similar tendency surfaces in Aristotle's suggestion that a person is really his practical intellect (1166a10-23, 1168b29-1169a3; cf. 1177b26-1178a8, *Phys.*

259b8-11). However, in EE Aristotle is committed to saying that A causes an action whenever a want causes an action in accordance with the conditions in (15). Hence, EE is committed to identifying A with the appetitive part of his soul as well as with his intellect.

In discussions of the free will problem there are three main views of what it is to act freely: libertarians hold that one acts freely when one acts without being caused to do so; some hold that one acts freely when one does what one wants to do; and some hold that one acts freely only when one could have done otherwise. It is interesting to note that all three of these ideas are present in EE's account of voluntary action.

I

Before considering cases of duress where an agent acts under a threat, Aristotle, in II.8, gives an account of compulsion (*βία*) which applies to inanimate objects as well as to living things (1224a11-1225a1). Whenever an external agent causes an object to move or rest in a way contrary to the natural internal impulse (*ὀρμή*) of the object, it acts under compulsion (1224a22-23, b7-8). For example, when a stone, which by nature moves downward, is thrown upward by some agent external to it, it is compelled (*βίῃ*) and forced (*ἀναγκάζεται*) to do so. The fact it is forced so to act means that it cannot act in accordance with its internal impulse or origin (cf. *Meta.* 1015a36-b3).

Aristotle points out that while the internal origin in inanimate objects and non-human animals is single, human beings possess two such origins: appetite (*ὀρέξις*) and reason (*λόγος*). But instead of going on to analyze the situation when these origins conflict and the person is forced to act by some external agent, Aristotle discusses cases of continence and incontinence where the internal origins conflict, but there is no external cause of the action. Because of the absence of an external agent, Aristotle concludes that continent and incontinent acts are voluntary despite the fact that in both cases the agent acts contrary to an internal impulse. For it will still be true that the agent is caused to act by an internal origin (1224b8-11).

In 1225a2 Aristotle turns to consider cases where an agent acts after being threatened with harm unless he performs the action. Unlike the cases of continence and incontinence just considered, in these situations there is no conflict between reason and appetite (1225a3). In cases of continence and incontinence, the agent's appetite makes him want to do something which he thinks is bad. But in the cases under discussion, the agent is made to do something painful, and he does not want to do it as well as thinking it bad.²²

It is not clear whether Aristotle has in mind the same class of actions as those which are labelled "mixed" in NE (1110a4-b9). There, the threat can come from impersonal forces as well as human beings. But EE may be concerned only with situations where the threats come from human beings.

A provisional discussion of these cases precedes Aristotle's elaboration of his position (1225a6-8): These are said to be cases where agents are forced (*ἀναγκασθέντες*) to do what they do. But perhaps they are all really voluntary actions because the agent could have undergone the penalty rather than perform the base action.

This tentative argument appeals to

- (ii') Xing or not Xing was in A's control (and (i) A Xed) and takes its satisfaction to be sufficient for
(vi) A Xed voluntarily.

The ensuing discussion does not challenge the sufficiency of (ii') for (vi). Rather, it argues that the conclusion of the tentative argument is false because in some cases of acting under duress (ii') is not satisfied.

There follows the crucial passage on the correct interpretation of which depends the proper understanding of Aristotle's position (1225a8-14):

ἐπι ἴσως τοῦ ὦν τὰ
μὲν φαίη τις ἂν τὰ δ' οὐ. ὅσα μὲν γὰρ ἐφ' αὐτῶ τῶν
10 τοιοῦτων μὴ ὑπάρξαι, ἢ ὑπάρξαι, ραὶ ὅσα πράττει ἂ μὴ
βούλεται ἐκῶν πράττει, καὶ οὐ βίαι. ὅσα δὲ μὴ ἐφ' αὐτῶ
τῶν τοιοῦτων, βίαι πάσι, οὐ μέντοι γ' ἀπλῶς, ὅτι οὐκ αὐτὸ
11 τοῦτο προαιρείται ὁ πράττει, ἀλλ' οὐ ἔνεκα, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν τοῦ
12 τοῦ ἐστί τις διαφορᾶ.

8 But one might say this in some cases

9 but not in others.²³ All things of that kind where it is in

10 one's control whether they come about or not, whenever one does

11 what one does not wish to do, one acts voluntarily and not under
compulsion; but things of that

12 sort where they are not in one's control, are, in a way, done

13 under compulsion, though not simply, for one does not
choose the thing itself that one does but its purpose, since

14 even in these

14 cases there is a difference.

As we saw, in 11.6-8 Aristotle has tentatively argued that in the cases under discussion the agent acts voluntarily because performing the action or not is in his control. But he now says that the cases under discussion fall into two classes. In A type cases

(ii') Xing or not Xing was in A's control is satisfied and, as argued before, the agent then acts voluntarily.²⁴ However, contrary to what was supposed in 11.6-8, there are also

other B type cases where (ii') will not be satisfied and then the agent is forced to do what he does and acts involuntarily. But he acts under compulsion only in a way because, although he does not choose to perform the act which he considers bad, he does choose that for the sake of which he does it.

We can expand this by appealing to our interpretation of a rational power. I have suggested that

- (16) (ii') Xing or not Xing was in A's control at t if and only if, at t, A possessed a rational power to X,

and

(12) A possesses a rational power to X at t if and only if (A) the appropriate subject and any other necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ for Xing (distinct from decisively wanting to X) are present at t and their presence alone is insufficient to make it true that A Xes at t; and

(B) (i) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A Xes at t, and

(ii) given the presence of the appropriate subject, and $N_1 \dots N_n$, A's decisively wanting to not X at t suffices (or would suffice) to make it true that A does not X at t.

Now suppose that (12A) is satisfied: the appropriate subject and any other necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ for Xing (distinct from decisively wanting to X) are present at t and their presence alone is insufficient to make it true that A Xes at t. Suppose, for example, that Jones has Smith and his family in his control and threatens Smith's family with death unless he kills Brown. Smith has been given a knife and Brown is standing there wondering what Smith will do. After some hesitation, Smith kills Brown.

In the cases under discussion, the agent does what he does not want to do and considers to be bad (1225a3-4, 10-11). So Smith's killing of Brown was not caused by his wanting to kill Brown even though in the normal case it would be true that in the circumstances his wanting to kill Brown would have sufficed to make it true that he killed Brown.²⁵ Hence, the first conjunct of (12B) will normally be satisfied, and suppose that it is in the present case. Then the question of whether Smith was forced to kill Brown or did so voluntarily turns on the question whether the second conjunct of (12B) is satisfied: would Smith's decisively wanting to not kill Brown have sufficed to make it true that Smith did not kill Brown? If so, then killing Brown or not was in Smith's control, he killed Brown volun-

tarily and was not compelled to do so. If not, then it was not in Smith's control whether he killed Smith or not—he killed Brown involuntarily and was compelled to do so.

In the second—B—cases, then, even if Smith did decisively want not to kill Smith, it was not enough to make it true that he did not kill him. Or if he had wanted not to kill Smith he would have done so anyway. The situation is naturally described as one where Smith could not help himself; he had lost control over his actions and killed Brown involuntarily. Since he in fact killed Brown, he possessed the power (*δύναμις*) to kill Brown. But this was a non-rational power, the exercise of which was determined independently of what he wanted to do. For he did not want to do what he did. And either he wanted not to kill Brown and did so anyway, or he would have killed him even if he had wanted not to kill him.²⁶

It is clear why in the B type case, Aristotle will say that the agent is not the cause of his action and hence acted involuntarily. For according to (15), an agent is the cause of his Xing only if his wanting to X caused him to X. But when an agent is forced to X he does X despite the fact that he did not want to X.²⁷ Hence, (15) is not satisfied and the agent is not the cause of his Xing.

In B type cases, Aristotle says, although the agent is compelled to do what he does, he is only compelled in a way (*βίαι πῶς*) because he chooses the purpose for the sake of which he acts, even if he does not choose the act itself.²⁸ Thus Smith was only forced in a way to kill Brown because he did choose to save his family, although he did not choose to kill Brown.

Presumably, the point is that in the cases of a simple compulsion (*βίαι ἀπλῶς*) discussed prior to the present passage (1224a11-1225a1) the external origin moves the agent to action and the "agent" makes *no* contribution to the bringing about of the action. Thus, in the example at 1224b13-14, one person grabs another's hand and uses it to strike a third person. Here the owner of the hand makes no contribution to the action of striking the third person.²⁹ But in B type cases it is not true that the agent makes *no* contribution to the bringing about of the action. While Brown was anxiously awaiting to see what Smith would do, it was clear that in an important sense what was about to happen depended on Smith. Aristotle apparently wishes to capture this point by saying that Smith did choose to save his family, even though he did not choose to kill Smith. Hence, it is not a case of simple compulsion.

Since this feature of B type cases is apparently meant to distinguish them from A type cases, we can conclude that in A type cases it is at least possible that the agent chooses to perform the action as well as the purpose of the action.

Now, I have described the B type cases as situations where (12A) is satisfied but (12B) is not because, as in the example, at least the second conjunct is false: in the circumstances the agent's wanting not to X either did not suffice or would not have sufficed to make it true that he did not X. But it is possible that Aristotle would describe the situation differently, or that he thinks that there are some cases that should be described differently. For he might say that in some cases the reason why Xing or not Xing is not in the control of the agent acting under duress is not that, while (12A) is satisfied, (12B) is not, but that (12A) is not satisfied. Suppose that one of the necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ for Black's talking is a certain degree of composure— N_3 . Suppose Robinson threatens Black with death if he talks. Robinson's threat might cause such fear in Black that N_3 is destroyed. Then talking or not talking was not in Black's control because (12A) was not satisfied: not all of the necessary conditions for talking were present.

Call the cases where (12A) is false B2 cases and the situations where (12B) is false B1 cases. It is possible that Aristotle believes that

- (17) If an agent decisively wants to X (not X) when the appropriate subject and necessary conditions $N_1 \dots N_n$ are present, then he *must* X (not X).³⁰

If so, then (12B) is always satisfied and all B type cases will be B2 cases. If Aristotle does not accept (17), then a possible third type of case is a situation where both (12A) and (12B) are false.

In the Robinson-Black case, (12A) is false because of the absence of one of $N_1 \dots N_n$. There, Black lacks the power to talk. In other cases (12A) might be false because the presence of the appropriate subject and $N_1 \dots N_n$ alone *do* suffice for Xing. Then the agent will lack the power to not X. But since no power (*δύναμις*) is *defined* by reference to an external threat, in such cases none of $N_1 \dots N_n$ will be some external threat. So if such a case is to count as an instance of compulsion, (A) must be false because *in the circumstances*—which include an external threat—the presence of the appropriate subject and $N_1 \dots N_n$ alone sufficed for the Xing.

However Aristotle thought of B type cases, the point will remain that Xing or not Xing is not in the agent's control because he does what he does not want to do and what he does is not brought about, even in part, by what he wants to do, and would not be brought about by what he would want to do.³¹

After 1225a8-14, Aristotle goes on to say that the question of whether an agent was compelled will depend on the alternatives he was faced with. Thus, if in the case where Smith killed Brown the threatened penalty for not killing Brown had been to be tickled

in the ribs, Smith could not have claimed to have been compelled to kill Brown (1225a14-25). And the point is reiterated that the question of whether an agent under threat acts voluntarily or involuntarily depends on whether the performance or non-performance of the action was in the agent's control. And this will depend on what the nature of the individual under threat is able to bear (1225a19, 25-27).

In general, then, we can say that Aristotle, in EE, agrees with Harry Frankfurt in thinking that an agent can correctly claim to have been coerced into performing an action only if he could not prevent himself from doing it.³² It is not enough for the agent to point out that the alternative was made substantially less attractive by the threat. Aristotle also agrees with Frankfurt in thinking that the agent may truly claim to have been coerced even when the threat was unreal. If an unreal threat results in the agent's losing control over whether he Xes or not, then the agent was coerced whether or not the penalty would have ensued if the agent had refused to comply with the threat. And finally, Aristotle agrees with Frankfurt that a threatened agent evades moral responsibility for what he did only if he was not in control of what he did. For EE identifies the class of actions which are voluntary with the class of actions for which an agent is responsible.³³ Hence, even an agent threatened with a harsh penalty will be morally responsible for complying with the threat if the performance or non-performance of the action was in his control.

II

I now want to consider some difficulties which EE's treatment of coercion creates for Aristotle when we try to describe in more detail the motivation of agents acting under duress; and then explain how these difficulties are overcome in NE.

Aristotle says that the compelled agent neither wants nor chooses to do what he does. Thus, in the example with Smith, Jones and Brown, Smith did not choose to kill Brown. We can see why Aristotle adopts this view, if EE accepts the position of NE V.8 that if an agent chooses to do what is bad, then he is vicious (1135b25). When Smith killed Brown, he performed an act that was bad ($\phi\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu$ —1225a4), but obviously it does not necessarily follow that Smith is vicious. To avoid that conclusion Aristotle must deny that Smith *chose* to kill Brown.

But now, although Aristotle denies that Smith chose to kill Brown, he does assert that Smith *chose* to save his family. Smith killed Brown for the sake of saving his family (cf. 1225a18-19); the saving of his family was the end of his act of killing Brown. This

immediately raises the problem of how to reconcile Aristotle's statement that, here, Smith chooses the end of his action, with his view that choice is of means and not of ends (1226a7-8).³⁴ The same problem arises for NE. Here, I will assume the correctness of John Cooper's interpretation that Aristotle's statements that we do not deliberate about or choose ends, mean only that we do not deliberate and choose ends *as such*. That is, apart from the ultimate end of *eudaimonia*, any other end E can be chosen as the result of deliberation. It is just that E was not the end in that particular context, where some higher end was concluded to be realizable by means of E.³⁵

(A) If Smith *chose* to save his family, then Smith *voluntarily* saved his family (1226b34-36). But if he voluntarily saved his family, then saving his family or not was in his control and he saved his family because he wanted to do so. Hence, he could have not saved his family and would have done so if he had not wanted to save it. But how could Smith have been thus in control of whether or not he achieved the end of the action, without being in control of whether or not he performed the action itself? How could it be that he could have stopped himself from saving his family when he could not stop himself from killing Brown? If Smith could not prevent himself from killing Brown, and in the circumstances his killing Brown saved his family, then neither could he prevent himself from saving his family.

Furthermore, if Smith chooses to save his family, then he does so after deliberating about what to do, and deciding that saving his family is the means to achieve some higher end. But now, if Smith's fear, say, did not make it impossible for him to deliberate about whether or not to save his family and choose to do so, how could it have made it impossible for Smith to deliberate about whether to kill Brown and choose to do so?

(B) We have seen that Aristotle divides cases of action under duress into two classes—in B type cases the agent acts involuntarily but in A type cases he acts voluntarily and is not compelled to do what he does. Now, cases of duress are supposed to be cases where the agent does what he does not want to do (1225a3-4, 10-11) even if he acts voluntarily. This contradicts (15), which says that an agent is the cause of his action, and hence acts voluntarily, only if his wanting to perform the action causes the action.

This could plausibly be said to simply be evidence against (15). But matters are not so simple, because 1225a11-13 implies that the voluntary agent acting under duress chooses his action, and if so then he must also want to do it (1226b16-17). This seems required in any case, for if the agent acting under duress performs his action

voluntarily, why *couldn't* he decide to perform it after deliberation, and then do it as a result of choice? There is no reason why a threatened agent *must* lose the ability to deliberate and act after having thought the matter out. And Aristotle says nothing about choice which rules out the possibility of the threatened agent acting on a choice. If the agent acting under duress can act voluntarily after deliberation, then he can also choose to perform the action and hence do what he wants to do.

So, while Aristotle says that the voluntary agent acting under duress does not want to do what he does, he seems to suggest and is anyway committed to the view that he *does* want to do what he does. (C) If the voluntary agent acting under duress chooses what he knows to be bad, then if EE accepts the position of NE V.8 that an agent's choosing to do what is bad suffices to establish the viciousness of the agent, then Aristotle must say that any voluntary agent who acts from choice when under duress and does what is bad must be vicious. The conclusion is clearly unacceptable. If Smith chose to do what was bad in killing Brown, it may be that, although he is the most virtuous person in the world, he chose to do it because he correctly considered the alternative to be even worse.

NE I-III avoids these difficulties. There (II.4), Aristotle rejects the view that an agent's merely choosing to do what is bad establishes the viciousness of the agent. He asserts that it is additionally required that the agent choose the act knowingly, for its own sake, and the action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character (1105a31-33; cf. 1144a17-20). Only then will the vicious act be done viciously and be sufficient to establish that the agent is vicious.

This disposes of the problem in (C), for when the virtuous Smith reluctantly but voluntarily killed Brown, his act did not proceed from a state of vice, nor did he kill Smith for its own sake but for the sake of saving his family. Hence, even if he killed Brown because he chose to kill Brown, that does not suffice to make him vicious.

Problem (A) is disposed of in NE III.1 with the denial that there are any B type cases, i.e. Aristotle claims that in all cases of acting under duress the particular actions performed are voluntary on the grounds that, in these cases, "the origin (*ἀρχή*) that moves the instrumental parts of the body in such actions" is in the agent (1110a15-16). Hence, NE is not faced with the task of explaining how Smith could have voluntarily saved his family when he involuntarily killed Brown; and explaining how saving his family or not could have been in Smith's control while killing Brown or not was not in his control; and explaining how Smith could have chosen to save his family after deliberation but could not have chosen to

kill Brown after deliberation. For according to NE, Smith's individual act of killing Brown was voluntary, and Smith was in control of whether he performed it or not.

Further, according to NE, Smith may have *chosen* to kill Brown³⁶ after deliberation (1110a12, 19-21), and that means that Smith may have killed Brown because, in the circumstances, he wanted to kill Brown (1113a9-11). Of course, there is also a sense in which Smith wanted not to kill Brown (1110a9-10, b3, 5): in the abstract, it is not something he would want to do, and he did not perform the act of killing Brown for its own sake. Hence, in a way, Smith's act was involuntary. But there remains an important sense in which it is true that Smith wanted to kill Brown, and that want caused his action. This disposes of the problems in (B).

The last paragraph alludes to another feature of NE's account which confirms its superiority over that of EE. Return to our case where Smith kills Brown because of Jones' threat to murder Smith's family if he does not. Suppose Smith is greatly distressed but does not lose control of himself—i.e. (ii') is satisfied—and he kills Brown with great reluctance. Then on EE's account, Smith killed Brown voluntarily and that is the end of the matter. But surely there remains some important sense in which it is true to say that Smith killed Brown involuntarily, even if he was in control of his action. NE at least tries to accommodate this point. EE ignores it.

We see, then, that several difficulties in EE's account of compulsion are avoided in NE. This lends support to the view that NE is the more mature of the two works.³⁷

NOTES

¹P. Moraux and D. Harlfinger [1].

²A. Kenny [2]. Also see M. Woods [3].

³1225b8-10, 1226b30-32. References are to the Teubner edition of the *Eudemian Ethics*

edited by Sussehl.

⁴Cf. *Phys.* 194b18-20, *An. Post.* 94a36-37.

⁵1223a2-4.

⁶1223a4-7.

⁷1223a7-9.

⁸1223a16-18.

⁹Or rather this will be so if, given the presence of the appropriate subject and other necessary conditions, Aristotle considers the agent's not wanting to X sufficient to make it true that the agent not-Xed, and does not also require A's wanting to not X. The justification for this last sentence will become clear shortly.

¹⁰*Phys.* 255a9-10 says: "If it is in fire's power (*ἐκ τῆς δύναμει*) to move upwards, it is clearly also in its power to move downwards." Generalized, this says that if Xing is in A's power, then Ying is in A's power (where Y is the contrary of X). This appears to entail that it is in A's power to X or to Y. And if it is in A's power to X or to Y, then it is in A's power to X or not X, and it is in A's power to Y or not Y. Cf. NE 1113b7-8.

¹¹David Furley is mistaken when he says that inanimate natural bodies, unlike living things, possess no origin (*ἀρχή*) of acting (*κίνησις, ποίησις*) but only suffering (*πάσχημα*). (D. Furley [4]: 165). See, for example, *Meta.* 1048a1-8, *Phys.* 255a20-23, *De Gen. et Corr.* 324a9-14, 29-b4.

Some may object to my use of the *Metaphysics* to interpret EE. But in the absence of any explanation in EE itself, the only reasonable alternative to pure speculation is to attempt to use what Aristotle says elsewhere about the subject as help in understanding EE itself.

¹²Aristotle appears to allow that the action of Xing may not follow when the required patient and circumstances are present even if one wants to X (and there is no contrary want). For he says that the action follows when one wants it *xuētōs* (1048a11-13; cf. *De An.* 433a4-8).

¹³Henceforth ignored.

Aristotle argues in EE II.7 that voluntary action cannot be defined as action in accordance with want. This seems to show that—contrary to what I am about to suggest—the notion of an agent's causing an action cannot be explained in terms of a want of the agent causing the action since EE identifies the class of voluntary actions with the class of actions of which the agent is the cause. But in fact, when Aristotle argues against the thesis that voluntary action is action in accordance with want, he argues only against the following claims:

Voluntary action is action in accordance with desire

Voluntary action is action in accordance with *θῆμῶς*

Voluntary action is action in accordance with wish.

His arguments establish only that, for any of these states, action in accordance with it is not necessary for voluntary action. He does not argue that action in accordance with one of these states is not sufficient for voluntary action. Nor does he have any argument against the suggestion that an action is voluntary if and only if it is in accordance with wish or *θῆμῶς* or desire. As has been noted before, it is therefore puzzling why Aristotle claims to have disproved the suggestion that voluntary action is action in accordance with want.

¹⁴Cf. *De Motu Anim.* 701a31 where *ὁρεξις* is the appetitive part of the soul, as at 701a1.

¹⁵Nevertheless, EE's commitment to (v) appears to conflict with *Phys.* 253a11-21 and 259a1-16 where Aristotle asserts that an agent's action is caused by something other than and external to the agent.

David Furley attempts to reconcile this latter claim with Aristotle's description of animals as self-movers: "An animal is correctly described as a self-mover, because when it moves, its soul moves its body, and the external cause of its motion (the *ὀρεκτόν* is a cause of the motion only because it is 'seen' as such by a faculty of the soul" (Furley [4]: 177).

But this cannot be right because it is inapplicable to the example in *Phys.* 259a11-15. There the external cause of an animal's moving is food eaten sometime before which has been digested and is being distributed through the animal now when the animal is moving. Aristotle cannot mean that the food is a cause of the motion only because it is now seen as desirable by the animal. Nor can it even be said that the animal must have seen the food as desirable when he ate it. For it would be just as true that the food was the cause of the motion if the animal had eaten the food by accident or unintentionally, i.e. without thinking of it as desirable.

Furthermore, on Furley's interpretation Aristotle's position is inadequate. For often animals will be moved by a desire to act without there being any individual object desired. It is simply false to say that "there must be an external object" (Furley [4]: 177) nor does this fail to be so only in cases of delusion or hallucination. I become hungry, want food, and begin to walk around looking for food. Here there is no particular item of food which is seen by me as desirable at the time I want food and start moving to get some. Hence, on Furley's interpretation, Aristotle must describe this case as one where I move without being moved by an external cause, contrary to *Phys.* 253a11-12 and 259b1-16.

¹⁷EE does not distinguish "in ignorance" and "through ignorance."

¹⁸EE122b29 and *Phys.* 227b20-228a1, b1-3, 261b36-262a5. Some might interpret Aristotle's requirement that the subject of the change be one non-accidentally (227b31-32) as implying that A's killing the man is distinct from his killing of his father on the grounds that the man and his father are only accidentally one. But this interpretation contradicts Aristotle's statement of his criterion at 242a69-b40. Suppose motion x is a motion from an individual quality or place q₁ to an individual quality or place q₂, and motion y is a motion from q₃ to q₄. Then, according to 242a69-b40, x is y if they occur during the same time, q₁ = q₃ and q₂ = q₄. This criterion identifies A's killing his father and his killing the man for they do not differ in any of the relevant respects.

242a69-b40 evidently takes for granted that only one substance can possess an individual quality. Suppose our example was of A wounding the man. Then the end point of the change (action) would be an individual wound. Since the wound can belong to only one subject and belongs to the man, and belongs to A's father, the man is his father in the required sense. The same will go for the substantial change of killing.

¹⁹Set aside deviant causal chains.

²⁰Anthony Kenny overlooks this when he says that "since one class of involuntary actions is actions done in error, there will be some cases even within the narrow class of actions-in-our-power-to-do-or-not-to-do of which we will not count as cause" (A. Kenny [2]: 11). This directly contradicts 1223a7-8.

²¹Cf. T. Irwin [5]: 346. An explanation of the sort provided in the text will apply to both the involuntary and the non-voluntary motions distinguished in *De Motu Anim.*, ch. 11. Kenny's attempt to read into EE the view that some actions are *ἐπιτηδύ* to do without being *ἐπιτηδύ* not to do ([4]: 8-9) has been adequately dealt with by C.J. Rowe [6]: 251.

²²Note that Aristotle says not merely that the agent wants not to perform the act but that he does not want to perform it. Hence, Terry Irwin is wrong to suggest that Aristotle considers the cases under discussion to include cases of acting on a desire ([5]: 347). I do not understand why Michael Woods thinks it "linguistically easier" to translate 1225a8-9 "Perhaps one would say some of these things are true others not" rather than "Perhaps one would say some of these actions are voluntary others not" ([3]: 142). For 'voluntary' is naturally understood to have the same reference as 'πάρρητες' in 1.7 and 'ραδύρα' in 1.6, viz. the class of actions where one does under threat what one neither desires nor wishes.

²³Kenny interprets 1225a9-10 to be saying that the question of whether the agent acting under duress acts voluntarily depends on whether or not the agent is responsible for the overall situation S in which he is being subjected to threats, not on whether it was in the agent's power to X or not X. So the question is: "Was S or not S *ἐξαιτιῶν*?" not "Was Xing or not Xing *ἐξαιτιῶν*?" ([2]: 42).

First of all, this view is mistaken. A man may have joined a terrorist organization voluntarily, and hence be responsible for the existence of the present situation where he is threatened with death unless he kills someone. But that is plainly insufficient to make it the case that he now kills the person voluntarily.

But there is no reason to accept Kenny's interpretation. First, whenever in 1225a2-34 Aristotle mentions something the presence or absence of which must be in one's power in order for the act to be voluntary, it is the performance or the non-performance of the act that is referred to. Thus, in 1225a25-30, Aristotle says that everything turns on τὸ *ἐφαυτῶ*, and points out that certain agents act involuntarily because it is not *ἐξαιτιῶν* to say what they say or do what they do.

1225a17-19 says that certain acts are compelled because οὐ γὰρ *ἐφαυτῶ* *ραδύρα*. Kenny says that 'ραδύρα' refers to "the overall situation," and after quoting 1225a19-21 he argues for this claim by saying: "Note that it is not the actions done out of love or rage that are being considered as involuntary, but these states themselves: which confirms the view that in the immediately preceding passage [1225a17-19] it was the voluntariness of the overall situation that was in question" (p. 45). Hence, when Aristotle says certain acts are involuntary because οὐ γὰρ *ἐφαυτῶ* *ραδύρα* (1.19), 'ραδύρα' refers to 'the overall situation.'

But this argument rests on an assumption which there is no reason to accept: states such as love or rage are like "overall situations" and unlike actions. In fact, 'ραδύρα' must refer to something mentioned in 1255a17-19, but those lines mention only actions and say nothing about overall situations.

Further, on Kenny's interpretation Aristotle is here deciding the question of whether certain agents act voluntarily on the basis of a criterion that has no relation to his own definition of voluntary action. (ii') is a part of that definition, and according to it, for an act to be voluntary what must be *ἐφαυτῶ* is to act or not act (1225b8, 1226b30-31). As we have seen, Aristotle considers (ii') both necessary and sufficient for voluntariness. But on Kenny's interpretation, Aristotle will have to allow that an agent may act voluntarily even when (ii') is true.

Further, on Kenny's interpretation, Aristotle here lays down a criterion for voluntariness, and then, when he comes to state his definition of voluntariness one page later (1225a8-10), ignores that earlier criterion.

There is no need to embrace these absurdities. In 1225a9-10 Aristotle is appealing to (ii'), part of his definition of voluntary action.

²⁵But presumably there will also be cases where Smith's wanting to kill Brown would not suffice for his killing of Brown. It would still be true that he possessed the power (*δύναμις*) to kill Brown since in fact he would still kill Brown. His wanting to kill Brown would not then be the cause of his killing Brown, but that is also true of the example discussed in the text.

²⁶In the Smith-Brown case, Smith is threatened with a penalty unless he performs a positive action. In such cases, the question of whether the agent acted voluntarily will normally depend on whether (B)(ii) is satisfied: would the agent have refrained from doing it if he had decisively wanted to not perform he action? In cases where an agent is threatened with a penalty unless he *refrains* from an action, the question of whether the agent acted voluntarily will normally depend on whether (B)(i) is satisfied: would the agent have formed the action if he had decisively wanted to do so?

²⁷It might be said that in the Smith-Brown case Smith's wanting to save his family caused his killing of Brown. So (15) may be satisfied, and therefore we must say that Smith caused his killing of Brown—But in this case there would be no question of Smith voluntarily killing Brown as a result of the satisfaction of clauses (b) or (c) of (ii'). Smith is fully aware of the fact that the act to be carried out is one of *killing Brown with a knife*. And therefore, in order for Smith's killing of Brown to be voluntary, it must be caused by the desire to kill Brown.

²⁸1225a11-13. Let Xing be the act performed which is a means to the end Y. Kenny says that 1225a12-13 cannot mean that the agent chooses Y because of Aristotle's view that it is means and not ends that are chosen (1226a7). Hence, Kenny asserts, 1225a12-13 must mean that the agent chooses X for the sake of Y ([2]: 42).

But Aristotle's statement that the agent chooses the end Y cannot mean that the agent does choose the means X for the sake of Y since the immediately preceding words state that the agent does *not* choose X. Likewise, 1228a14-15 says that no compelled agent chooses to do what he does.

Michael Woods says that a12-14 could be read in the following way: "He acts in a way under compulsion, but not simply because he does not choose the actual act that he performs, < he does choose that >, < but because he does not choose > the final end" ([3]: 144).

But, (1), again, 1228a14-15 rules out the possibility that the agent chooses the act, but that B is the case and is not the case *simply* because of B' suggests, not that B is not the case, as this interpretation does, that, since (on this interpretation) Aristotle says this is not a case of compulsion *simply* because the agent does not choose the act, that Aristotle believes the agent *does* choose the act. (3) It is natural to suppose that in 1.12 'ἀπλῶς' is contrasted with 'πῶς.' That contrast is lost on the present interpretation.

²⁹Cf. NE's description of cases of compulsion ἀπλῶς (1110b1) as cases where the agent contributes nothing to the production of the act (1110a1-2, b2-3, 16-17).

³⁰It is not clear whether Aristotle accepts (17) because passages such as *De Motu Anim.* 701a7f., 702a10-17, and NE 1147a25-31 say at most that the agent must act in certain conditions if he is not prevented. Does Aristotle believe that whenever the agent is prevented, this means that one of N₁ . . . N_n is absent? *Meta.* 1048a16-21 answers "Yes, if what prevents the action is *external* to the agent." That leaves open the possibility that something internal to the agent might prevent the act even when all of N₁ . . . N_n (and the appropriate subject and the decisive want) are present. If Aristotle admits that possibility, he does not accept (17).

³¹Michael Woods says that an interpretation of the sort I have given of 1225a2-33 is open to the objection that 1225a2-3 says that in cases of duress there is no conflict between reason and want, "whereas an agent's acting wrongly under overwhelming psychological stress is a case of such conflict," as we also find in cases of incontinence ([3]: 144).

But it is certainly far from obvious that it is true to say, for example, in the case where Smith was compelled to kill Brown, that Smith must have had a desire to kill Brown he did not resist, while thinking it was wrong to kill Brown. No doubt Smith did experience psychological conflict, but why must that be a conflict between reason and desire? When Smith killed Brown he may have done it because he was afraid of the consequences of not killing him, not because he had a desire to kill Brown which his reason was unable to control.

In any case, the fact that a certain interpretation gives a philosopher an erroneous view provides no objection to that interpretation.

³²H. Frankfurt [7].
³³1223a9-20, 1228a7-11. I argue the point in another paper, "The Eudemian Ethics on Knowledge and Voluntary Action," *Phronesis*, forthcoming.

³⁴A related problem arises from the implication of EE 1215b26-29 that if an agent Xes voluntarily, then he Xes for its own sake. But many voluntary actions are chosen, in which case, according to 1226a11-13, one Xes not for its own sake but for the sake of the end.

³⁵J. Cooper [8]: 14-18.

³⁶It is not certain that this is correct because 1110a12 says that these actions are ἀνερῶν, and it is not certain that Aristotle did not distinguish between ἀνερῶν and προαιδέων.

³⁷I thank an anonymous referee for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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