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David E.W. Fenner

University of North Florida, dfenner@unf.edu

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Resolving the Tension in Aristotle's Ethic: The Balance Between Naturalism and Responsibility

David E. W. Fenner

Aristotle's ethic is based on two elements: character and decision-making. But sometimes these two elements can conflict. The following scene, taken from John Huston's film "Key Largo," describes such a conflict.¹

Gaye: Hey, fella, what'ya gonna do? Don't go with them. They'd wait until you get them inside of Cuba, and then they'd kill you. You'd never walk off that boat.

Nora: She's right, Frank. Tell them you'll go, and they'll hurt you. And then when you get outside in the dark, make a break. Run. Try to get away.

Gaye: It's your only chance, fella.

[Pause.]

Nora: Frank, what are you thinking?

Frank: You were right. When your head says one thing and your whole life says another, your head always loses.

Gaye: Out there in the dark, make a break for it. Run!

Frank: Yeah, that's what my head says.

Temple: You gonna make a fight of it, Frank?

Frank: Got to. Not that one Rocko more or less makes any difference in this world. What I said upstairs still goes. I haven't changed my tune. It's just that... I've got to.

Temple: Well, if you're a fighter, you can't walk away from a fight. That's the answer, I guess.

I

What advice would Aristotle have given Frank? The end, which is to say the conclusion to Frank's actions, is, as Aristotle points out, not a matter of decision.² The specific end here is to survive and to rescue Nora, Temple and Gaye. The means, says Aristotle, are the only things under deliberative consideration. And Frank has accomplished that deliberation (*proairesis*). His head tells him he should run. But will he run? No. This is because his character, his "whole life," informed by and constituted of certain virtues, demands that he do otherwise: as Frank is a fighter, and since he is clearly on the side of right, so must he fight.

If Aristotle were to counsel Frank to fight, then Aristotle would seem to be disregarding the deliberative consideration that each ethical dilemma must occasion for the outcome of that decision to be one which is voluntary and a matter of responsibility for the deliberating agent. If Aristotle were to counsel Frank to run, then Aristotle would seem to be ignoring the power of the entrenchment that typifies the states of character, the virtues, that inform Frank's character. Without that goodness of character, all the deliberation in the world, says Aristotle, would not make a bit of difference. A character informed by virtue (*arete*) is necessary to ground the deliberative activity, to insure that such activity will aim away from extremes of activity and toward the mean. Without such a character, the thought behind the action would not be the deliberation that occasions ethical behavior. It would be mere cleverness.³

Of course, a character without, at the appropriate times, due deliberation, renders the agent carrying out the ensuing actions ultimately blameless and praiseless for the behaviors performed. Indeed, this is the central problem found in any naive naturalist portrayal of ethics. If one is fated to do what he does because those behaviors necessarily flow from that agent's specific and established character, then he can hardly be held accountable for those behaviors. The behaviors were, at base, just a matter of following out a certain program, one which was introduced to him by his parents, both instructive and genetic, and his environment – in short, by nature and by nurture. He cannot, so would say the naive naturalist, do otherwise than his program demands. So the difficulty, then, is obvious: how can he be at all responsible for any of his actions?

Naturalism may entail behavioral determinism. I would argue⁴ that in classic mechanist versions of naturalism, there is no place for freedom of the will. Consider the system of the Epicureans, for example. Epicurus described an ethical or behavioral system which was based on the

natural attraction of human beings to pleasure and the natural detraction from pain. Consider that if one's program is to seek pleasure, then one will seek pleasure in just the same way that a toaster will toast toast and not serve at all in the washing up of the dishes. Epicurus' system, one purely materialist, it may be added, would have been fully determinist⁵ were it not for a crucially important, though sometimes taken for granted, element in his ontology. Though Epicurus believed in an atomist ontology, the one essentially described by Democritus, Epicurus was careful to include in his atomism the notion that the atoms which make up the human soul have the power or property of swerving from their paths. Were it not for this simple swerve, the materialist ontology that Epicurus describes, and the naturalist ethic entailed therein, would be entirely determined. And with behavioral determinism comes the inevitable position that humans simply run out their programs and are as responsible, as praiseworthy or blameworthy, for their behaviors as the toaster is for toasting toast.

If Aristotle is wedded to an ethic based on the establishment of an entrenched character in an individual, and so he is, then how is it that he is to avoid being a behavioral determinist? Swerving atoms? Wrong ontology.

Responsibility for behaviors is introduced in the Aristotelian ethic through Aristotle's discussion of the freedom of action. Voluntary actions are those which are not compelled by any external force, but whose cause is a movement within an informed⁶ and considerate or deliberative agent (cf. 1111a23 and 1113b). For Aristotle, if actions are voluntary, they are subjects of blame or praise:

Since virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed, on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes also pity. . . (1109b30).

And conversely, if actions are not voluntary, they are not a matter of assignment of blame or praise:

But no one is encouraged to do the things that are neither in our power nor voluntary; it is assumed that there is no gain in being persuaded not to be hot or in pain or hungry of the like, since we shall experience these feelings none the less (1113b29-31).

But this brings us back to the point about how Aristotle would have counseled Frank.

If he said for Frank to run, he would have made situation deliberation of central importance, and when the outcome of that deliberation falls in conflict with the agent's character, then one is in the position of having to wonder on what grounds, through what methods, Frank is supposed to deliberate the best means to an essentially unidentified ends. That is, without the underpinning of Frank's character as a guide to Frank's deliberations, we are left clueless as to how we -- or more importantly, Frank -- is to judge the correct course of action. Without the development and grounding of an established character, Aristotle is left, essentially, without an ethic.

If, on the other hand, Aristotle would have said that Frank should fight, then given the sole motivation for Frank's fighting being Frank's character, Frank's agency is rendered redundant. Why should he have sat in that room deliberating with his friends, trying to reconcile his actions upstairs with what he was now contemplating doing, if he truly had no choice but to play out the program of his character?

Indeed, this last problem is even more interesting when we think of Frank as simply being a role written by a playwright, being acted out by Humphrey Bogart. One can watch the film a thousand times, and every time Frank will end up going onto the boat with Rocko. Bogart could have rehearsed that scene a hundred times, and each time the outcome would have been the same. It was a part written by a playwright. Though it appears in the film that Frank had a choice about whether to run or fight, *Bogart* had no choice at all.

Are human characters scripted in this way? Skinner thought so. And today society at large tends toward the understanding of a person's behaviors flowing out of situations and genes beyond his or her control. We are driven to understand the backgrounds of Hitler, Stalin, Jeffrey Dahmer, Lorena Bobbit and the Menendez brothers: Dahmer was abused as a child; Bobbit was abused by her husband; the Menendezes were abused by their parents. Naive naturalism allows us to excuse them all -- and not just them, but ourselves as well -- because scripted behavior is not free action. And so goes the ethic.

This is the problem. How was Aristotle able to construct a system which was essentially naturalist,⁷ while at the same time ensuring reasonable and meaningful assignment of blame and praise? How can these two traditionally diametrically opposed positions be melded together into a single coherent and consistent ethical system? Aristotle thought he did

this, and in the next section of this paper, I will examine his case, as expressed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*⁸, for the compatibility of the two. I believe, however, that Aristotle's stated position is problematic, and so following the discussion of Aristotle I will offer a strategy coming out of Aristotle's work that offers hope.

II

Aristotle does not argue specifically about the compatibility of established character and voluntary action. Indeed, he believed that *if* it were the case that the character were given or set by nature, as it is in our nature as human beings not to fly under our own natural power, then all action would be essentially involuntary (cf. 1103a19-25 and 1110b9-15). So his position is not one of attempting to reconcile a pre-determined character, as it were, with freedom of will. Aristotle's position is to argue that the character itself, its development and establishment through reinforcement and habit, is itself voluntary. In other words, we are each individually responsible for our own characters.

But are we really responsible for our characters? If the answer to this question is definitely yes, then we will not be able to fault Aristotle for falling prey to behavioral determinism and the ensuing loss of responsibility. If the answer to the question is either no or is in doubt, then Aristotle's salvation vis-a-vis his ascription of freedom to actions which flow from a firmly established character may be in jeopardy.

Aristotle argues that we are responsible for our characters not in the abstract sense that we intricately plan the development and direction of our characters and not in the sense that we chart the course of our characters from infancy to maturity. Rather, we must understand that an individual character is established through habituation and practice, with each moral event strengthening some excellence or some defect in that character. And while one is not responsible for charting the path of his or her character, one is responsible for each individual action, each moral decision, that leads to the character's establishment. Each time one chooses to act generously in a particular situation, one strengthens one's virtue of generosity. And each time one chooses to act unjustly, one fortifies the vice of injustice in one's character.

... for we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual

progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary (1114b31-1115a3).

Later, Aristotle writes

For all men think that each type of character belongs to its possessors in some sense by nature; for from the very moment of birth we are just or fitted for self-control or brave or have the other moral qualities; but yet we seek something else as that which is good in the strict sense – we seek for the presence of such qualities in another way. For both children and brutes have the natural dispositions to these qualities, but without reason these are evidently hurtful (1144b2-9).

Therefore, as in the part of us which forms opinions there are two types, cleverness and practical wisdom, so too in the moral part there are two types, natural virtue and virtue in the strict sense, and of these the latter involves practical wisdom (1144b14-15).

Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit (1103a24).

If we choose, at some point when it is in our power to choose the right thing over the wrong, or the virtuous action over the vicious, and we choose the vicious action, that decision and ensuing action are voluntary and fully our responsibility. So it is, then, that as we are responsible at each individual decision for that decision, so it is, transitively, since the character is developed and established solely on the basis of repeated activity, that we are responsible for the formation of our characters, whether to the good or to the bad. Aristotle writes,

[P]erhaps a man is the kind of man not to take care. Still they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their time on drinking bouts and the

like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character.... Now not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a thoroughly senseless person. Again, it is irrational to suppose that a man who act unjustly does not wish to be unjust or a man who acts self-indulgently to be self-indulgent. But if without being ignorant a man does the things which will make him unjust, he will be unjust voluntarily. . . .

Aristotle, however, goes on to say

Yet it does not follow that if he wishes he will cease to be unjust and will be just. For neither does the man who is ill become well on those terms. We may suppose a case in which he is ill voluntarily, through living incontinently and disobeying his doctors. In that case it was then open to him not to be ill, but not now, when he has thrown away his chance (1114a4-22).

The question this last quote raises is how responsible for one's character can one truly be? Once the character has matured and become firmly established, so that the exercise of its states are almost instinctive, is it fair to call actions which flow from that mature character fully voluntary? Jean Roberts⁹ writes

The question being considered here is whether the actions of those of firmly established character, for whom being of a different character is no longer the same sort of option as it once was, are to be seen as involuntary rather than voluntary. Aristotle does not deny that there is a real difference between actions done out of firmly established character and those not. He does claim that, despite the difference, actions done out of firmly established character are not to be seen as involuntary.

It is easy to understand this, and it has been so understood, as claiming that until one's character is firm one is in a position to choose between virtue and vice, one chooses knowingly, and thus the vicious are vicious as a result of their own prior actions which were knowingly and freely

performed. The vicious chose at an earlier time to perform the sorts of actions that they know would make them vicious in character, so they wanted to become bad and, moreover, wanted to become bad at a time when it was still possible for them to be good.

Let us assume for the moment that this is right. Aristotle would be admitting that actions done out of firmly established character are, because fully determined by that character, not strictly speaking voluntary. They are, nonetheless, voluntary in some derivative sense because that character itself is the consequence of earlier actions which were strictly voluntary (Roberts, pp. 27-28).

The problem, *prima facie*, about actions done out of firmly established character, given what Aristotle had been saying about voluntary action, is that they seem to be suspiciously similar to natural processes. . . . The person of firmly established character is . . . all too similar to the stone that cannot be taught to fly (see 1114a16-19 and 1103a20-26) (Roberts, p. 29).

In the end, Roberts concludes that Aristotle's treatment of responsibility and the freedom of action is adequate. But she nevertheless raises an important problem for the Aristotelian position on the freedom of actions flowing from a mature character, and I think this problem bears further examination.

Problem One: External processes and states are involved in the constitution of the character. A voluntary action is one whose movement is in the individual (1111a22-23). It then follows that an action whose movement is not within the individual in question is not a voluntary action. And while there are "mixed" actions (1110b3-7), it is unclear whether all of the external forces that work toward the establishment of a given character are indeed occasioned each and every one by a movement in the individual in question.

(1) The natural states of pleasure and pain (1104b4-1105a16 and cf. 1110b9-15) necessarily act as reinforcers to the choices we make, and this is especially true in our formative years. Indeed, at the start, it is pleasure and pain that start the processes of habituation. And yet the occasions of our experiencing pleasure and pain are for the most part strictly out of our control. Experiencing these feelings is a matter of *nature*, not a matter of

free choice. Now, while it is the virtuous person who knows when to pursue pleasure and when to refrain, it is not the case that in our formative years we are in possession of the maturity and virtuosity necessary to avert the strong influence that the forces of pleasure and pain exert over us.

(2) Moral instruction and teacher reinforcement are discussed by Aristotle as being guides in our youths. Moral education plays a serious role in the constitution of our characters, and on simple reflection, it must be clear that in concert with (1), moral instruction is strictly an external and compelling cause to our habit development.

(3) Finally, it is the case that some people are simply born with a natural faculty for discerning goodness that others do not possess.¹⁰ If my friend has a greater eye for judging rightly than do I, then I am by nature inferior in the matters of moral character formation than is he. While I have no reason to lament the situation or begrudge my friend, as I do not begrudge my basketball-playing friends for being by nature tall, it is nonetheless the case that my well-endowed friend will have a leg up, so to speak, on good character formation. And this advantage is a matter of nature, not of practice or volition.

Problem Two: Throughout Aristotle's work, responsibility is only described as being about singular events. In order to act virtuously, one must not only have one's actions flow from a virtuous character, one must also have deliberated about the best means of exercising one's virtue. A precondition of such deliberation is for one to understand the situation and grasp the context in which the exercise of virtue is being contemplated. If one fails to do this, it constitutes ignorance on the part of the moral decision maker, and may, given certain situations, constitute some impairment of the voluntary nature of his or her actions.

However, nowhere in this formula about the avoidance of ignorance and the need to be informed is expressed any need to be knowledgeable about any other situation but this one. I need not consider, or at the very least Aristotle does not instruct me to consider, events in my life like this one, neither am I supposed to engage in any sort of Kantian universalizability test or Rawlsian original position construct. I must know the situation in which I am involved, and with due care determine how I ought act given the leadings of my virtues, but no more.

Given the absence of any connection -- metaphysical, psychic, rational or temporal -- with other situations in one's decision making, one is naturally at a loss to understand then the mechanism of transitivity that allows one to be held accountable over the whole of his or her formative years for the construction of his or her character. Since ethical decisions

are, for Aristotle, matters of the moment, it is unclear how we are now to accept that in derivative or transitive fashion, we must assume responsibility for some state which has only psychologically supervened or emerged from the hosts of decisions we made in our youth.

Problem Three: even if one is responsible for one's immature actions and the establishment of his or her character, the fact remains that for any given event subsequent to the onset of a mature character, one cannot be held responsible for that event considered in isolation. Perhaps I was free in my formative years to behave as I saw fit at the time. And perhaps those decisions and actions on my part did indeed lead to the construction of a certain character that I now possess. And perhaps still that I am in some fashion responsible for the development of that character. Yet no where in this equation do I find reason for believing that I am freely responsible for the actions I *now* commit, actions which flow from a mature, firmly established character. To employ a Platonic allusion, I am, in committing action flowing from a settled character, three steps from full autonomy. My action, determined by my character, flows from this character, the creation of which I only tentatively assume responsibility, constructed of the voluntary but individual actions of my youth – themselves, it might be added, immature and not appropriately called virtuous.

If one is ill, supposing the illness came from overwork and fatigue, a matter originally in control of the agent, that individual is not punished or held blameworthy each time he or she sneezes or coughs. If one in his or her youth dropped out of high school for frivolous reasons, we do not forever after hold that individual blameworthy for that decision. One may return to finish high school, take a G.E.D. examination, or go on to found a major corporation. We do not fault the illiterate individual for not taking advantage of the school system while he or she attended school; we celebrate his or her bravery in taking up the challenge to learn to read as an adult.

We do not as a matter of course find blameworthy, or even praiseworthy for that matter, the actions of individuals which flow from or involve circumstances beyond their control, even if they themselves were the creators of such circumstances. One need only think of the compassion that is appropriately felt for the mother of a newborn living on welfare. No matter our convictions about welfare programs, to disparage the birth and life of that new child is simply inhuman.

Analogously, actions which flow from a settled character, considered in isolation, are not voluntary in the sense that the agent performing those actions could do otherwise. Once we understand mature

virtuous action as almost instinctual in nature, we understand that those mature moral events are not free in the same way that immature moral decisions are.

Problem Four: if we must have an established character from which to practice truly virtuous acts, then we are in the strange situation of having, in the above situations, our most free and voluntary acts being done before we can correctly call them virtuous, and those acts we commit that can truly be called virtuous done after full freedom and volition are things of the past. Aristotle writes,

[To do those acts which are virtuous,] [t]he agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the act, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his actions must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character (1105a30).

When I am young, I act freely but not virtuously. When I am mature, I act virtuously, but not with the sense of freedom that I had in my youth. It becomes, then, a matter of moral luck – no action committed in my youth being properly called virtuous – that the habits ingrained in me lead to the establishment of virtues in my character. Those immature actions are not virtuous, strictly speaking. And so those actions of my youth are merely the means to the ends of my acquiring virtues. And since my then immature mind, reasoning immaturely, and making each decision based on the situation in isolation from all others, is a matter for which I must bear responsibility, it is curious indeed to consider upon what that responsibility rests.

It is in concert with Aristotle's position for me to claim that I am most free in my youth. But I am, according to common sense and the implications of Aristotle's position on virtuous action, least responsible in my youth. And yet it is volition that is meant to ground responsibility.

Let me conclude this section by restating that Aristotle wrote clearly that since the character was, at least in the formative stages, the individual's responsibility, it is not the case that we rightly call actions preceding from that character involuntary. What I have attempted to do in this section is to cast doubt on this thesis. Whether or not Aristotle was mistaken is not a matter upon which we need settle. It is enough that doubt can be cast to prompt us to look for other strategies for reconciling established character with freedom of action.

III

In this final section of the paper I want to sketch a strategy¹¹ for resolving the sometime tension between character and decision-making. Whether this strategy is ultimately successful is still, I think, a matter open for debate; however, it is the best way I can think of for resolving the tension in Aristotle's ethic. This strategy involves making a distinction between the ends and means identified in each moral decision. Aristotle says that in any decision deliberation, the ends of the action contemplated are not a matter for deliberation. The ends are set – we might say "pre-determined." It is the means, and the means alone, that are the subject of deliberation. In essence, when one is faced with a moral choice, one does not debate with oneself about whether or not to make a decision, one only deliberates about which decision should be made. That a decision will be made is analytic to having the problem; one does not have a problem that does not call for a solution, else it was not really a problem in the first place.

Consider Aristotle's practical syllogism. In that syllogism, the major premise always consists of a general statement of the end that is desired to be reached. The middle or minor premise relates the conclusion of the deliberation; the minor premise states the means by which the end is to be reached. The deductive conclusion, then, is merely the command to pursue the means that was related in the middle premise. For instance:

Major Premise:	Patience is a virtue.
Minor Premise:	In the event that I must wait for someone, I ought wait patiently, in calmness and for a reasonable amount of time.
Conclusion:	Such an event is at hand, so I will wait patiently.

That was an easy one. Let's take one that focuses on a specific moral dilemma.

Major Premise:	Murder is wrong.
Minor Premise:	In the event that I find myself holding a knife to the throat of an innocent person, I ought not cut that person's throat.
Conclusion:	Such an event is at hand, and I will not cut that throat.

Though my first example was a bit mundane, and in my second I may have overcompensated, the point is quite simple. The end, which is expressed in the major premise, is not a matter, according to Aristotle, of debate. It is only the means to that end, as expressed in the minor premise, that is a matter for deliberation.

How does this strategy resolve our dilemma? *We may understand character and the deliberative process as having two fundamentally distinct provinces.* The established states of one's character refer, and refer only, to the ends which that individual intends to pursue. Since the ends are not a matter of deliberation, the settled character can contribute to the practical syllogism in a non-flexible, non-deliberative way by conferring the content of that major premise. And, in complement, since the result of the deliberative action is reported only in the minor premise, then voluntary decision-making can have a purview that is not in conflict with that of the character.

To repeat, the settled state of character only refers to the ends of action. And the ends of action are not a matter of deliberation. It is only the means to that end that are the subject of deliberation, and such deliberation involves not a consideration of *whether* the settled ends ought be pursued, but only of *how best* they ought be pursued. While the character's contribution is not subject to the empirical description of the context of the decision, the deliberative activity of the agent must necessarily take into account the context, implications and ramifications peculiar to each particular moral decision-making event. Understanding the two traditionally opposed aspects of ethics – settled, programmatic character and flexible, rational deliberation – as having two distinct provinces, precludes the tension that is created in attempting to reconcile them together.

Does this solve the problem? I think it may. Although one does not experience, in making ethical decisions, the fullest control in those situations, there is still a meaningful venue of decision-making. One can be held praiseworthy or blameworthy for how one chooses to handle a given situation, and this can be the case even if what prompts one to action (one's settled virtues) is not under immediate (volitional) control. Indeed, this is not much dissimilar from the common perception that some, if not much, in particular moral situations, is out of one's control. We see this problem frequently in considerations of the place of moral intent: sometimes the best intentions cannot be actualized in a situation due to elements of the situation that are out of the agent's control. Although the difficulty

described in this paper focuses on elements of moral situations that (in many moral theories) are traditionally under agent control, the parallel to more common limitations on agent control is obvious. With Aristotle's virtue ethic, we do not have as much control in situations as we might otherwise have, but there is still something upon which to assign praise and blame: how we choose to handle the situation. And that is enough to make such actions meaningfully voluntary.

IV

To recap the ground we have covered, it is clear that there exists in the history of ethics the problem that naturalist systems of ethics frequently fall prey to the entailment of behavioral determinism. If this occurs, it robs the ethic of doing any real work. Instead of proscribing correct and incorrect action, or allowing those considering the situation and activity to meaningfully assign praise or blame, the naive naturalist ethic functions only as a psychological thesis: that one will behave according to whatever psychological or mechanical program one is informed by.

The question of this paper was whether Aristotle's system falls prey to such a difficulty given his reliance on the individual's established character as one of the bases upon which ethical decisions are made. The case that it does is strong. The strategy for answering the problem presented here is that in Aristotle's system, the roles which character and deliberation play are quite different. Character informs the ends of action; deliberation informs the means to those ends. Since they are in different provinces, the tension between the two as means of coming to ethical decisions is averted.¹²

1. "Key Largo" was originally a play which was written by Maxwell Anderson. Huston's film starred Humphrey Bogart as Major Frank McCloud, a visitor to a hotel on Key Largo, Lauren Bacall as Nora Temple, daughter-in-law to the hotel's owner, Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Temple, the hotel's owner, and Claire Trevor as Gaye Dawn, a sometime companion to Johnny Rocko, a Milwaukee gangster who has taken over the hotel, played by Edward G. Robinson.

2. Aristotle says "The end, then, being what we wish for, the means what we deliberate about and choose, actions concerning means must be according to choice and voluntary. Now the exercise of the virtues is concerned with means" (1113b2-4).

3. See 1144b 1 & 14.

4. I have argued that some kinds of naturalism entail determinism in an unpublished paper, "Naturalism, Mechanism and Determinism."

5. Aristotle would have agreed (1103a19-25 and 1110b9-15).

6. Ignorance as such does not automatically make the action involuntary; see 1110b3-5.

7. I take it, as did G. E. Moore, that sufficient evidence for claiming a view to be naturalist is that an identity or reduction is made between value states or properties and natural states or properties. Aristotle does this in two ways: (i) in offering a functional definition of goodness, where a thing's goodness is dependent on the natural and empirically discernable state of being an object of a kind and the natural and empirically discernable state of being a highly functioning one of that kind. I discuss this in depth in my "Are Functional Accounts of Goodness Relativist?" (*Reason Papers*, Forthcoming). And (ii) secondly, in identifying the only intrinsic goodness as that "end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake..." (1094a17-18), Aristotle identifies the chief good, and the only intrinsic good in his system, empirically, in terms of the actions we actually commit and the desires we actually possess.

8. W. D. Ross' translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* will be used throughout the paper.

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9. Jean Roberts, "Aristotle on Responsibility For Action and Character," *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1), 1989, pp. 23-36.
 10. Aristotle discusses this in (1114b5-9).
 11. Perhaps I ought say an *additional* strategy given the possibility that actions which flow from an established character may still be, at least derivatively, voluntary.
 12. I want to acknowledge a debt to the work of Professor K. S. Harris on Aristotle.