ARISTOTLE ON ANIMALS, AGENCY, AND VOLUNTARINESS[182]

Nancy E. Schauber[*]

" I do not know why Aristotle should not hold a dog responsible for biting.... Moreover, he explicitly connects voluntariness with praise and blame, and it is agreed that if he really means to withhold responsibility from animals, this is at any rate nowhere explicit."[183]

Nowhere in Book III, chapters 1-5 of the Nicomachean Ethics[184] (hereinafter "Ethics" or "EN") does there appear a term which could unequivocally be translated as "moral responsibility."[185] Nonetheless, there is widespread agreement among students of Aristotle's Ethics that these chapters contain Aristotle's account of moral responsibility. Why? Although Ethics Book III begins with a discussion of acting voluntarily (hekousios), this is evidently in service of Aristotle's larger discussion of virtue.[186] Clearly, one's actions will not count as virtuous if they are not performed voluntarily, nor are such actions to be praised (or vicious ones blamed). Since we also tend to think that candidates for praise and blame are morally responsible for what they do, there is some reason to think that Aristotle's account of the voluntary is meant to serve as his theory of moral responsibility, without which the Ethics would be incomplete. Having supposed that this is Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility, several critics go on to argue that his account is inept because it implies a contradiction, that it is deficient for failing to justify ascriptions of responsibility and in properly identifying candidates for moral responsibility. Alternatively, critics argue that his conception of moral responsibility does not correspond to modern

182. For helpful criticism of previous versions of this paper, I am grateful to Rüdiger Bittner, David Copp, Dan Devereux, John Simmons, and audiences at Bowling Green State University and the University of Richmond, Symposium on "Humans and Other Animals".

* University of Richmond

183. RICHARD SORABJI, ANIMALS, MINDS AND HUMAN MORALS 111 (Cornell University Press, 1993).

184. ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS (Terence Irwin trans., Hackett, 1985). Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics consists of ten Books divided into chapters. References to this work will be cited to the page in Terence Irwin's translation that also refers to the pagination of Immanuel Bekker's edition of the Greek text (Berlin, 1831).

185. Aristotle does use the adjective aitios, which may be appropriately translated as "responsible," "cause," or "to blame," but he does not modify aitios with any word corresponding to "moral." *See id.* at 1111a29, 1113b23-1113b25, 1113b30-1113b32.

186. *See id.* at Book III, ch. 1.

notions of moral responsibility. None of these critics' attempts to resolve the difficulties in Aristotle's discussion is ultimately successful (though many provide clues as to how we should understand the text in question). In this article, I propose a way of reading the text that has both interpretive and philosophical merits. It is a more straightforward and literal reading of the text, requiring less interpolation than alternative readings. It also attributes to Aristotle a theory of moral responsibility which is, if not correct, at least as worthy of attention as many of the contemporary theories under debate. My own view is that the objections raised miss their target not because they fail to voice legitimate concerns about an adequate theory of moral responsibility, but because what Aristotle offers in the text in question (especially in Ethics Book III 1-2) is an account of the proper expression of praise and blame, and not a theory of moral responsibility.

Ethics III, chapters 1-5 appears to express or imply the following theses:

(A) We are morally responsible for all voluntary actions.
(B) Children and nonhuman animals act voluntarily.
(A) and (B) imply (C):
(C) Children and nonhuman animals are morally responsible.

Yet Aristotle seems also to believe:

(D) Children and nonhuman animals are not morally responsible.
There seems to be a blatant contradiction in Aristotle's account of moral responsibility, but to simply accept this would be ungenerous. A variety of scholars have suggested that by taking a broader view of the Ethics, we may find in it a more philosophically plausible theory of moral responsibility.

Can a more plausible position be developed for Aristotle, given the text with which we have to work? Here are the options that have been defended:

Amend (A) by showing that the only ones responsible for voluntary acts are normal adult human beings.

Deny (B). Accept voluntariness as a necessary and sufficient condition for responsibility, but deny that children and nonhuman animals act voluntarily in the relevant sense.

Supplement (A) by claiming that we are responsible for a larger class of actions than just the voluntary.[187]

Affirm (A), but claim that what Aristotle means by "responsible" is not what we mean, so that it no longer seems antithetical to our conception of morality.

Deny that (A) is Aristotle's view; reinterpret the text to show that voluntariness is often of interest in assessing responsibility, but is a precondition only for praise and blame.

Deny (C). Is there any reason to suppose that this interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility is restricted to persons?[188] After all, if the conditions for voluntariness are met - namely, that the origin of action is internal to the agent and these are the necessary and sufficient conditions for moral responsibility - why not consider whether the theory might extend to nonhuman animals, who may also be thought to originate actions?

Richard Sorabji does just this, he observes that Aristotle holds that animals act voluntarily and that voluntariness implies liability to praise and blame, or in other words, as he claims, implies moral responsibility.[189] Sorabji takes his interpretation of Aristotle (which yields a view that he seems to find independently plausible) to be at odds with those interpreters who hold that Aristotle denies responsibility to

187. This suggestion does not resolve the aforementioned contradiction. It does, however, make an important contribution to our understanding of Aristotle's views about the voluntary, and how they relate to moral responsibility. Its importance will become apparent in what follows.

188. Irwin holds that the contradiction should not be resolved by denying (D) even though he admits that he does not know where Aristotle explicitly affirms it. Still, Irwin's belief is not arbitrary. Aristotle ". . . clearly assumes that animals and children are not to be subject to legal and moral sanctions." Terence Irwin, Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle, in ESSAYS ON ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS 125 (Amelie Oksenberg Rorty ed., 1980). He never suggests any radical extension of the recognized class of responsible agents. Irwin proposes to reject (C) and to accept Aristotle's definition of the voluntary, but he aims to show that Aristotle could, on his own terms, justify restricting responsibility to normal adults. *See* strategy (1), *supra* page 3. If successful, Irwin claims this would yield a genuinely Aristotelian and philosophically respectable theory of moral responsibility.

Two points should be made in response to this approach; they are related. As Irwin formulates the problem, he does not distinguish between praise and blame on the one hand, and moral responsibility on the other. This conflation saddles Aristotle with a contradiction he does not commit. That is, Irwin would find no contradiction in Aristotle's text if he had made this distinction. Then it would be unproblematic to claim that "A is a proper candidate for praise and blame if and only if A does x voluntarily." Second, since for Irwin voluntariness is a necessary condition for both moral responsibility and praise and blame, in denying that voluntariness is sufficient for moral responsibility, he must also be denying that voluntariness is necessary for praise and blame, but Irwin has no apparent reason for denying this other than to render Aristotle consistent.

189. *See* SORABJI, *supra* note 2.

animals. The source of Sorabji's disagreement, as he understands it, is that other interpreters believe Aristotle's conception of the voluntary to be more complex and, in particular, to require a role for reason. If reason is required for voluntary action, then clearly only humans can be morally responsible, since Aristotle explicitly denies reason to nonhuman animals.

I think Sorabji's interpretation of Aristotle on this point is incorrect, but for different reasons than are advanced by the interpreters he challenges, and for reasons which I think can help bring into view the role of animals in today's communities. Sorabji thinks that the claim that animals, in acting voluntarily, are liable to praise and blame is indistinguishable from the claim that animals are morally responsible. Indeed this seems to him so obvious that he does not offer any justification for it. However, Sorabji's view is false. From the fact that something is liable to praise or blame, it does not follow that it is morally responsible. Nor does Aristotle make this mistake. I will defend this view in Sections II and III. Before turning to that argument, however, I will briefly examine the other suggested interpretive strategies.

The first strategy aims to show that children and nonhuman animals do not act voluntarily in the sense relevant to moral responsibility. For purposes of this paper, it will be sufficient to mention two difficulties with this approach. First, it involves ignoring, or at least not taking very seriously, Aristotle's explicit assertion that children and nonhuman animals act voluntarily.[190] Second, there is good reason to suppose that (at least sometimes) children and nonhuman animals do act voluntarily. If they did not, it would be senseless to try to modify their behavior through expressions of praise and blame.[191] But we (moderns)[192] do praise and blame them, and sometimes, we suppose, to good effect. Defenders of this view may overlook this fact, mistakenly assuming that praising and blaming, and holding others responsible are the very same practice, even though they are logically distinct. Accordingly, it is possible for children and nonhuman animals to engage in voluntary behaviors while not being morally responsible just in case it can be

190. ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 111b9 ("For children and the other animals share in what is voluntary. . . .").

191. This point is also made by Jean Roberts. Jean Roberts, *Aristotle on Responsibility for Action and Character*, 9 ANCIENT PHIL. 23, 25-26 (1989). Further references to this article will be contained in the text.

192. Throughout this paper, the term "we" is used to denote people in modern society.

reasonable to praise and blame those who are not morally responsible.

Acknowledging that children and nonhuman animals engage in voluntary behaviors, but may not be morally responsible, shows that voluntariness is not a sufficient condition for moral responsibility. What is less frequently noted is that it is not even a necessary condition. They are neither praiseworthy or blameworthy, nor responsible for voluntary actions, of course, because their "... moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who acts or is acted upon,"[193] or they are attributable to ignorance of the particular circumstances of action. There is, however, in addition to voluntary and involuntary, another class of actions which are neither voluntary nor involuntary and which arise through a certain kind of ignorance. As Randall Curren writes:

The kind of ignorance that makes an act involuntary must be ignorance that originates outside of the agent, for otherwise the act does have its origin and cause in the agent. Yet voluntariness requires knowledge of the circumstances (EN 1111a22-24), so that when an act is done in ignorance of the circumstances of the action, and that ignorance is the agent's own fault, then responsibility arises because the act and the resulting harm have their source and cause in the agent, even though the act is not voluntary.[194]

The point of this article is to articulate the distinguishing criteria of a class of action for which we are culpably ignorant, about which it might be said "he should have known better," that is, when the ignorance is the agent's own fault. The law classifies such actions as negligent. When a person acts negligently, he does not act with the intention of causing harm; he does not act maliciously. Nonetheless, the person should have foreseen the harm as likely, and a reasonable person - one who does not have a defective character—would have foreseen the harm as likely, and consequently refrained from causing it.[195] That Aristotle distinguishes a

193. ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1110a1-1110a3.

194. Randall R. Curren, *The Contribution of Nicomachean Ethics iii 5 to Aristotle's Theory of Responsibility*, 6 HIST. PHIL. Q. 265 (1989).

195. Aristotle's view, according to Curren is, "that if an agent causes harm without choosing to do so [non-maliciously], but does so in a way that reflects and springs from a defective character, then the agent may be regarded as the source and cause of the harm, and so responsible for it, since we may regard character and the conception of ends belonging to it as the originating seat of agency." *Id.* at 265. It seems to me, as I will argue in the text, that the agent's conception of ends is largely irrelevant to his negligence. Rather, the agent's character is defective because he fails to consider the likely effects of his actions. The defect, in my view, is a defect of practical reason.

class of negligent action shows that he viewed this aspect of responsibility in much the same way as contemporary Anglo-American legal systems. We can be responsible (culpable) for harms caused unintentionally or not voluntarily. Voluntariness is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for responsibility, since we are justified in holding responsible those who, in causing harm, do so because of a culpable defect in their understanding of what they must do.

The preceding discussion showed that we should not deny (B) - that children and nonhuman animals have a share in the voluntary, and that voluntariness is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for responsibility. But this does not foreclose the logical possibility that children and nonhuman animals may be morally responsible, and it was this concept that was found troubling. We need to turn now to what is perhaps the boldest suggestion of how we should understand Aristotle's views (strategy (4) above). That is, accept (A), (B), and their logical implication (C), but let us not be disturbed; let us instead suppose that Aristotle means something different than we do by "responsibility", so that holding children and nonhuman animals morally responsible becomes more palatable. What may initially recommend this approach is that it involves relatively little in the way of interpretive gymnastics. We need not supply an account of specifically moral responsibility, and, since Aristotle never explicitly claims that children and nonhuman animals are not responsible, we need not be concerned that he contradicts himself on this point. Still, I think this strategy amounts to throwing the baby out with the bath water, and that there remains a philosophically plausible interpretation of Aristotle's text - strategy(5) above, which I defend in what follows. In order to see this, it will be helpful both to have in mind Aristotle's larger project in the Nicomachean Ethics, and to carefully consider the proposal that Aristotle's conception of moral responsibility does not correspond to the modern view of this issue.

I.

By the end of Ethics II, Aristotle is prepared to identify the domain of virtue, that is, to take note of those qualities of actions that are indicative of a virtuous character. It is important to keep in mind that it is character that is most properly said to be virtuous; actions are truly

(that is, not coincidentally) virtuous when they are performed in a way that a virtuous agent would perform them.[196] This is to say that actions are, typically, signs of and caused by character (and so are said to be expressions of virtue in a derivative sense), and that character is the seat of virtue.

In order to display the virtuous character, Aristotle needs to give an account of how a person with a virtuous character acts. His point in Book III, chapters 1-5 is not to say what specifically makes action x an instance of virtue y - this is covered in part by the doctrine of the mean in Book II and the later discussion of the individual virtues in Book III, chapters 6-12. The idea is rather to identify which qualities any action must possess in order to be a candidate for virtuous action. It is with this in mind that Aristotle begins his discussion of the voluntary, but the voluntary is only the broadest category into which an action must fall in order to count as possibly virtuous; involuntary actions are neither signs of, nor caused by virtuous character. In order to be a sign of virtue or vice, an action must possess (or lack) a variety of other characteristics. Yet, as Aristotle's discussion reveals, we have other interests in people's behavior besides an interest in their virtue. A person's actions still affect others, independent of whether the person is virtuous, vicious, or neither, and we may want to change their behavior, even if we cannot reform their character.

The actions of the virtuous person express his character, who he is. This is a premise, rather than the conclusion of an argument.[197] In other words, Aristotle does not first develop a theory of moral responsibility in order to conclude that a person can be virtuous only on account of the actions for which he is responsible. Aristotle assumes that for the most part, we can respond to and judge people on the basis of their

196. "Since it is possible to do injustice without thereby being unjust, what sort of injustice must someone do to be unjust by having one of the different types of injustice, e.g. as a thief or adulterer or brigand. ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1134b30; "For when someone inflicts these harms [actions caused by natural or necessary human emotions] and commits these errors, he does injustice and these are acts of injustice; but he is not thereby unjust or wicked, since it is not vice that causes him to inflict harm." *Id.* at 1134b22-1134b24.

197. "But for actions expressing virtue to be done temperately or justly [and hence well] it does not suffice that they are themselves in the right state. Rather, the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is dong virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and third, he must do them from a firm and unchanging state....Hence actions are called just or temperate when they are the sort that a just or temperate person would do. But the just and temperate person is not the one who [merely] does these action, but the one who also does them in the way in which just and temperate people do them." ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1104b30-1105b9.

actions precisely because actions are reflections of the state of the agent's soul.

Of course, it is not always true that a person's deeds are an accurate reflection of his character. Sometimes we are forced to do things we do not want to do, sometimes we make mistakes or have accidents, sometimes we are virtuous or vicious only coincidentally. In all of these cases if the outcome from the agent's point of view is not what is wished for, then he may plead that what was accomplished was not truly his end. He might say 'I didn't mean to', 'I hadn't realized', 'I didn't know', or 'I couldn't help it'. In these sorts of cases, we suspend a variety of judgements and reactions we ordinarily make or have because, while the agent's actions normally reflect his character, the action in question is aberrant, and so one for which he ought not (does not deserve) to be judged harshly (or well). Actions that are not referable to the agent's character are not the proper object of moral evaluation.[198]

Aristotle's discussion of the voluntary in Ethics III.i is largely a discussion of what is not voluntary,[199] it is primarily concerned with exculpatory claims.[200] But from what exactly do such claims exculpate? Suppose I break my promise to take you to the train because I was kidnapped. When I later explain to you why I broke my promise, I will hope that my explanation (which takes the form of 'I was forced not to keep it; I couldn't help it') will (1) keep you from being or feeling angry with me; (2) convince you not to blame or find fault with me for my failure; (3) persuade you not to resent my failing; and (4) give you reason not to judge me a bad person. Of course these reactions are all related, but they are nonetheless distinguishable. Indeed the discussion running through Ethics Book VI, culminating in an account of complete virtue, employs these distinctions, though not as systematically as we might like.[201]

The absence of a clear and systematic account of the distinctions between these reactions is, in one sense, a virtue of Aristotle's account.

198. I will argue that it is for this reason that very young children and nonhuman animals are not the proper object of moral evaluation, namely, that they cannot yet be said to have characters.

199. Among actions that are not voluntary, Aristotle distinguishes between "mixed actions," *see* ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1110a5-1110a20, "non-voluntary actions," *see id.* at 1110b19 -1110b25, and "involuntary actions," *see id.* at 1110b31-1111a2.

200. Involuntary actions correspond to excuses which take the form "I couldn't help it," while non-voluntary actions correspond to excuses which have the form "I didn't know." See ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1110a1-1110a4, 1111a2-111a21 (exculpatory claims).

201. *See* TROELS ENBERG-PEDERSEN, ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF MORAL INSIGHT 256-60 (1983).

His discussion is premised throughout on how we actually interact with one another, what we say to each other, how we feel, what we can and cannot accept (and while there are standard reactions, often our reactions are nuanced so as to respond to the particulars of the case). It is largely a descriptive account, with occasional explanations and justifications of our reactions, rather than a prescriptive account of how we ought to react to others. For this reason, Aristotle can provide a more-or-less detailed picture of the landscape, but it would be inappropriate - it would not fit the subject matter - to erect a structure into which our various responses should fit.

The responses in question - anger, resentment, blame, judgment of vice - may appear to be linked together by the notion of responsibility. That is, they are each ways of holding others responsible. But failure to distinguish between these various responses has led some interpreters of Aristotle to allow just one of the responses to dictate the whole of a theory of moral responsibility. Once this mistake is made, it is only a short step to the claim that Aristotle's conception of moral responsibility does not correspond to modern notions. To show that view to be false, I will need to show why one who acts voluntarily is not, in Aristotle's view, thereby morally responsible. It is to that task that I shall now turn.

II.

An important component of Aristotle's theory of virtue is his account of the conditions under which praise and blame are appropriate. It is with these concerns in mind that he embarks on his discussion of voluntary action in Book III 1 of the Nicomachean Ethics. One recent critic, Jean Roberts, equating his theory of voluntary action with his theory of moral responsibility, goes on to argue that Aristotle holds a theory of moral responsibility that is alien to our modern conception of responsibility. I will argue, by contrast, (a) that more careful analysis indicates that Aristotle's theory of the voluntary is not coextensive with his theory of moral responsibility, (b) that in fact, what Aristotle offers in the text in question is best understood as a theory of praise and blame, rather than a theory of moral responsibility, and (c) that as a result we need not dismiss Aristotle's theory of responsibility as inconsistent with modern views.

The idea that Aristotle's theory of the voluntary is identical to his

theory of moral responsibility takes root in the assumption that when Aristotle marks off voluntary actions as those for which the agent is liable to praise or blame,[202] he is both equating praiseworthiness and blameworthiness with moral responsibility, and that Aristotle is prepared to deliver his theory of moral responsibility. Roberts' understanding of Aristotle's argument can be roughly summarized as follows:

We are not responsible for actions performed involuntarily.

We are praised and blamed (i.e., responsible) for all and only voluntary actions.

We are praised and blamed (hence morally responsible) only for actions referable to the agent's changeable desires.

Children and nonhuman animals act from changeable desires.

Children and nonhuman animals are praised and blamed.

Therefore children and nonhuman animals are morally responsible.

We (moderns) do not think children and nonhuman animals are morally responsible.

Therefore, if Aristotle thinks children and nonhuman animals are morally responsible, then he must have an alien conception of moral responsibility.

The argument, as I have crudely summarized it, serves more than one purpose. It points to an explanation of why we hold responsible only those who act voluntarily. It does this by offering a partial analysis of what is distinctive about voluntary action, showing (in broad outline) why voluntariness is a necessary and sufficient condition for praise and blame. It also shows why Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility is alien to our modern notion. As I have already suggested, I think the conclusion of this argument is false. It is false not only because it begins with a false premise, but also because the analysis of the voluntary is mistaken. The assumption that a theory of praise and blame is the same as a theory of moral responsibility is suspect. Since an analysis of the conditions for the former are not necessarily applicable to the latter more argument is needed. Furthermore, the analysis of the voluntary is misleading both because it fails to adequately distinguish between actions

202. "Virtue, then, is about feelings and actions. These receive praise or blame when they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, when they are involuntary." ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1109b30-1110a4.

that are not involuntary and those that are voluntary, and because it does not accord a sufficiently prominent role to the cognitive aspects of full voluntariness. I will comment on both problems in order to reveal two substantive philosophical points, namely, that there is good reason to distinguish between a theory of praise and blame and a theory of moral responsibility, and that the real force of Roberts' argument is to raise the question why we do not (generally speaking) hold morally responsible those who do not act voluntarily.

It is clear from Aristotle's discussion that he believes we neither praise nor blame actions which come about through force.[203] Also excluded from the class of the voluntary are actions that are due to certain kinds of ignorance (note that this feature is shared by contemporary theories of responsibility). Ignorance of the particular circumstances often makes an action involuntary, while ignorance of the universal (namely, the good) does not make an action involuntary.[204]

The condition of voluntariness or involuntariness of action is important for Aristotle because it concerns the explanation of what happened, and Roberts makes her case by focusing on the importance of appropriate explanation for justified ascriptions of responsibility. What is distinctive about her interpretation of Aristotle is both the claim that appropriate explanations centrally refer to desires of the agent that are, in principle, changeable, and that the reason the presence of these desires justify ascriptions of responsibility is that behaviors caused by changeable desires can itself be modified.[205]

An adequate explanation for what happened includes centrally the cause of what happened. Causal explanation figures prominently in our imputations of moral responsibility because we do not hold morally

203. He writes "What comes about through force or because of ignorance seems to be involuntary. What is forced has an external origin, the sort of origin in which the agent or victim contributes nothing -- if, e.g., a wind or human beings who control him were to carry him off." ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1110a1-1110a5.

204. *See id.* at 110b35-1111a22.

205. In general then, voluntary actions seem to be those which allow one to infer something about the desires of the particular agent and for which the condition of that agent's soul is the best explanation. T.H. IRWIN, *Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle*, in ESSAYS ON ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS 122 (Amelie Rorty ed., 1980). It is curious, as Irwin notes, that the Ethics does not actually mention the role of desire in voluntary action. *Id.* at 123.

It is worth mentioning, though it is not central to my concerns here, that Roberts fails to notice the third class of action pointed out by Curren, namely, those which are neither voluntary nor involuntary, but for which we may be culpable.

responsible someone who does not cause the event in question.[206] Roberts traces the cause of voluntary actions to a certain subset of the agent's desires, namely, those that reveal something about the particular agent. Explanations of actions that purport to serve as justifications for imputations of responsibility require not only that we identify the origin of the action (and thereby locate its cause) but also that the cause be a free cause. This is how we are to understand the requirement that the action reveal something about the agent.

That voluntary actions are explained by some changeable desire of the agent is crucial in leading Roberts to conclude that Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility is concerned solely with behavior modification. Her analysis of voluntary actions reveals that the desires which explain voluntary action are not, for example, a function of being a member of a particular species; such desires are both unavoidable and unchangeable.[207] Furthermore, such desires would not reveal anything about the individual agent. The fact that these desires are, in principle, changeable implies that they are specific to the individual and that the individual need not have had the desire.[208] The result is that the action that was caused by the desire was not necessary or unavoidable; in other words, it was freely caused. The importance of this fact for Roberts now becomes evident - these desires can be trained so as to produce beneficial actions and avoid harmful ones.

Roberts thinks that we are morally responsible for all actions that are

206. Two qualifications of this claim are in order. First, the importance of causation does not extend fully to instances of legal liability. In cases of strict or vicarious liability, a person may be held liable and punished even though she does not cause the event in question. This indicates that in the law, at any rate, liability to punishment does not presuppose moral responsibility in this sense. Second, I do not mean to exclude the possibility that one may also be morally responsible for one's omissions. It has been plausibly argued that one's failure to act may be the cause of a harm when one has a duty to prevent that harm. JOEL FEINBERG, HARM TO OTHERS 159-63 (Oxford University Press, 1984).

207. This suggests that actions that are explained by species-desires are involuntary and hence not ones for which we are morally responsible. Absent any further qualifications, this implies, implausibly, that the person who steals food because he is hungry does not act voluntarily and is not responsible for what he did. Roberts, *supra* note 10, at 25.

208. The desire is only "in principle changeable" because there are some desires which, either because they are cultivated or not properly trained from early on, are not in fact changeable. Aristotle remarks "Moreover, it is unreasonable for someone doing injustice not to wish to be unjust, or for someone doing intemperate action not to wish to be intemperate. This does not mean, however, that if he is unjust and wishes to stop, he will stop and be just. For neither does a sick person recover his health [simply by wishing]; nonetheless, he is sick willingly, by living incontinently and disobeying the doctors, if that was how it happened. At that time, then, he was free not to be sick, though no longer free once he let himself go. . . ." ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1114a11-1114a18. The point here is obvious: we can be praiseworthy or blameworthy, or morally responsible for actions that result from certain unchangeable desires, if we could have had better or worse desires through our efforts.

caused by a trainable desire because of two passages in the Ethics[209] in which Aristotle says that other animals and small children have a share in the voluntary, "and are therefore responsible, in his sense, for some of what they do."[210] Furthermore, we use the language of praise and blame in our interactions with small children and animals. The family dog is praised and rewarded for sitting on command, the small child may be reprimanded and punished for tormenting the dog (or her little sister). There appears to be evidence for believing that the class of voluntary actions is coextensive with the class of actions for which we are morally responsible, but equating the two, taken together with the belief that small children and other animals can act voluntarily, should strike the modern reader as odd, or so Roberts thinks. It should strike us as odd because we think that animals and small children are not morally responsible; we think they do not deserve to be held morally responsible because they do not have the capacity to act responsibly.

How should this dilemma be resolved?[211] It has been suggested that we can remove the air of paradox simply by supposing that Aristotle means something different by "moral responsibility" than does the modern theorist. He is not concerned with desert;[212] he is concerned only with the power of praise and blame to modify behavior. Voluntary actions are those which could have been different, or did not have to happen - if only the agent's desires were different. Praise and blame can, she thinks, modify a person's desires. Roberts concludes that since liability to praise and blame marks off those actions which are performed voluntarily, and since we (including small children and animals) are responsible for those actions performed voluntarily, then what Aristotle must mean in holding someone morally responsible is that we regard him as the sort of being who is, in principle, capable of modifying his behavior in response to

209. ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1111a25-1111a26, 1111b8 (Terence Irwin trans., Hackett, 1985).

210. Roberts, *supra* note 10, at 26.

211. Irwin thinks that Aristotle shares the belief that Roberts attributes to only the modern reader. Irwin claims that Aristotle believes the following. "A is responsible (a proper candidate for praise and blame) for doing x if and only if A does x voluntarily. Animals and children act voluntarily. Animals and children are not responsible for their actions." IRWIN, *supra* note 24, at 125. It appears then that Aristotle's accounts of voluntary action and responsibility result in a contradiction. There is clear textual evidence to support the first claim. See ARISTOTLE, supra note 3, at 1148b19-1148b31, 1149b22-1150a5. Evidence for the third claim is less obvious, but, as Irwin points out, Aristotle does assume that animals and children are not to be subject to legal and moral sanctions. Irwin identifies the same contradiction as Roberts does, but attempts to resolve it by different means, namely, by seeing whether Aristotle gives us reason to limit the class of voluntary actions to normal adults.

212. For a general discussion of desert-based justice *see* http://www.law.qut.edu.au/about/ljj/editions/v1n1/pojman_full.jsp.

praise and blame.

III.

This argument concludes that responsibility reactions of praise and blame are justified by the useful consequences that follow from these reactions, but the argument relies on certain questionable assumptions and inferences. Perhaps the most important of these assumptions is that praise and blame are addressed exclusively to those who are morally responsible. Are there good reasons for equating a theory of moral responsibility with a theory of praise and blame? If these theories need not be coextensive, we can still hold, with Aristotle, that small children and other animals sometimes act voluntarily and that we do praise and blame them (and may be justified in doing so), while denying the claim that they are morally responsible. Denying that they are morally responsible would free us from the counterintuitive conclusion that moral responsibility reactions are best understood as attempts to modify and regulate behavior. All we would be obliged to conclude is that, in some cases, praise and blame are used to modify behavior. This seems relatively uncontroversial, and embracing it would allow us to defend Aristotle against the charge that his conception of moral responsibility is alien to us because it is not desert-based, as modern theories of responsibility are supposed to be.[213]

The assumption that a theory of praise and blame and a theory of moral responsibility amount to the same thing rests on a perhaps more basic, but equally misguided assumption that Aristotle has given, in his discussion of the voluntary, a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for praise and blame. The behavior modification theorist needs to read Aristotle as claiming that an action is praiseworthy or blameworthy if, and only if, it is voluntary.[214] But this claim is highly implausible, and I see no reason to ascribe it to Aristotle.[215]

213. It is perhaps worth pointing out that, although the most popular contemporary theories of moral responsibility justify ascriptions of responsibility on the basis of desert, there are other, *e.g.*, consequentialist theories of justification which hold desert to be of less central importance.

214. If Roberts had recognized the third class of actions, she would not have been drawn to this conclusion.

215. Perhaps the clearest indication that Roberts' interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility is too simple comes in the passage immediately following the discussion of the voluntary. Aristotle writes "Now that we have defined what is voluntary and what is involuntary, the next task is to discuss decision; for decision seems to be most proper to virtue, and to distinguish characters from

If voluntariness is a sufficient condition for praise or blame, then we should expect people to respond to all voluntary actions with praise or blame. But we do not always respond in this way, and for good reason. I voluntarily brush my teeth each morning and evening because I desire good oral hygiene. Surely my tooth-brushing is not praiseworthy (though my young child's might be). Some voluntary actions, being trivial, are neither praised nor blamed.[216]

Not only do we refrain from praising or blaming trivial voluntary actions, but we also do not praise or blame morally neutral voluntary actions.[217] On any plausible conception of morality, most (or at least many) of the actions we voluntarily perform are best understood as morally neutral, and if we respond to them at all, it is with a morally neutral response. My sitting down when my feet are tired is morally neutral; under normal circumstances, so is going to the movies or eating pasta for supper. Accordingly, such voluntary actions are neither praised nor blamed.[218]

---

one another better than actions do." ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 111b5-111b7. Recall Aristotle introduced the discussion of the voluntary as part of his theory of virtue, and referred to virtue and vice as the objects of praise and blame. It seems reasonable to suppose that decision will help to pick out those who should be praised and blamed for their virtue or vice - that is, those who are morally responsible.

216. In Magna Moralia Aristotle claims: "[T]here are many acts which we do voluntarily before thinking and deliberating about them; for instance, we sit down and stand up, and do many other things of the same sort voluntarily, but without having thought about them...A few legislators, even, appear to distinguish the voluntary act from the act done by choice as being something different, in making the penalties that they appoint for voluntary acts less than for those done by choice." ARISTOTLE, THE MAGNA MORALIA 503-504 (G. Cyril Armstrong trans., 1934). This passage was pointed out to me by Walter Ott.

217. Acts for which one is morally responsible are those about which it makes sense to raise the question of praise or blame, punishment or reward. John Fischer notes that "there is a conceptual connection between moral responsibility and accessibility to activities such as reward and punishment, but an agent can be morally responsible for an action for which he ought not be either praised or blamed. (This sort of theory of responsibility is particularly attractive when one considers that there are certainly cases of morally neutral actions for which an agent is nevertheless responsible.)" JOHN MARTIN FISHER, INTRODUCTION TO MORAL RESPONSIBILITY 13 (John Martin Fisher ed., 1986). So, for example, it is coherent to ask whether Jean Valjean should be punished for stealing a loaf of bread, but under the circumstances, punishment may have been inappropriate. An action that is normally considered wrong may, in certain circumstances, be justified (or at least excusable) and so neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. Less dramatically, many of the actions we voluntarily perform are morally neutral - they are neither praise- nor blameworthy - but we are still responsible for doing them.

218. One might object that these claims are true only on a conception of morality in which obligation is the central idea. But even on Aristotle's teleological conception of morality, according to which a person pursues (his conception of) the good, it seems implausible to suppose that a person must choose every action in light of the good. We think a good life must include a measure of various types of activities including, perhaps, entertainment. But that does not imply that going to any particular movie is a good thing to do, much less a praiseworthy action.

We can learn that a normally trivial or morally neutral action (such as brushing my teeth or eating pasta) may not be choice worthy on a particular occasion. So, for example, I normally brush my teeth at night without giving it much thought. But suppose that I, along with several other people, am lost in the desert and I choose to use the last of our communal water supply to brush my teeth. A normally trivial action has become, in this case, morally wrong, and for such an action I would deserve moral censure. Similarly, if my eating pasta deprived a starving, but equally deserving, child from eating, that too might be morally wrong.

Aristotle clearly takes a similar view about trivial actions becoming morally significant. We see this in his desire to remove the air of paradox surrounding actions that do not seem entirely voluntary. Aristotle calls these "mixed actions,"[219] actions that one would not willingly perform ordinarily, but are still choiceworthy on certain occasions, and so are performed voluntarily. His account continues:

For such [mixed] actions people are sometimes actually praised, whenever they endure something shameful or painful as the price of great and fine results; and if they do the reverse, they are blamed, since it is a base person who endures what is most shameful for nothing fine or for only some moderately fine result. In some cases there is no praise, but there is pardon, whenever someone does a wrong action because of conditions of a sort that overstrain human nature, and that no one would endure.[220]

I take it that Aristotle would agree that no action, in a vacuum, is choiceworthy. An action becomes choiceworthy, or good, because of both the kind of act it is and the circumstances in which it is performed. Some actions, of course, are not usually choiceworthy, such as throwing the ship's cargo overboard.[221] By the same token, an action normally may be morally neutral - neither choiceworthy nor "rejection-worthy" - but be choiceworthy in certain circumstances. Throwing a javelin is ordinarily a trivial and morally neutral act; the act's character changes dramatically when its point is aimed at another's heart.

Since there clearly are voluntary actions that are neither praised nor blamed, we should conclude that Roberts' interpretation of Aristotle as

219. ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1110a12.
220. *Id.* at 1110a20-1110a26.
221. *See id.* at 1110a5-1110b5.

defining the voluntary in terms of praise and blame unnecessarily saddles him with an implausible (and, I will argue, avoidable) position. The examples of trivial and morally neutral actions show that voluntariness is not sufficient for praise or blame. It may be more plausible to claim that voluntariness is a necessary condition for praise or blame.[222] For now we should note that even if the domain of the voluntary were identical to the class of actions for which we are morally responsible, the fact that a person is praised or blamed for an action is not conclusive evidence that the person is morally responsible for that action.

IV.

Is Aristotle's discussion responsive to our pre-theoretical convictions about the relation of the voluntary to praise and blame? And how, if at all, are they related to his account of moral responsibility? I will argue that we can both salvage some of Roberts' understanding of Aristotle and make better sense of the text of Ethics III.1 by taking a closer look at how the language of praise and blame is used. I have already argued that the voluntary cannot be defined in terms of praise and blame. Nonetheless, I agree with Roberts to this extent, namely, that all actions that are appropriately praised or blamed are at least not involuntary.[223] Our disagreement concerns reasons for praising and blaming. Once we realize that there is more than one way to justify praising and blaming, we will be in a position to see that only certain uses of praise and blame presuppose moral responsibility, and that this notion of moral responsibility is a familiar one based on desert.

Even casual observation of ordinary discourse (observation that was equally available to Aristotle) reveals that we use the language of praise and blame in a variety of contexts. Let's consider a simple set of examples.

(1) Barbara is given a new puppy, Alice. Barbara adores Alice but is dismayed that Alice frequently jumps up and knocks her down. She decides that Alice must learn to sit when she commands her to do so. Barbara begins to train Alice, saying "Good Alice!" when Alice sits, and supplementing her praise with treats.

222. But even this claim is doubtful, or at least in need of qualification, given Curren's persuasive argument that Aristotle thinks we are responsible for negligent actions.

223. I amend Roberts' language with this awkward phrase to incorporate Curren's observation.

(2) When little Susie plays with other children, she tends to hoard her toys. Susie's parents decide that Susie must learn to share. They encourage Susie to share her toys by helping her to hand them over to other children, smiling approvingly, and saying "That's great, Susie!" when she does this herself.

(3) George is a hard-working man who is busy with his career and raising his family. George had planned to go to the movies tonight. On his way to the movies, he witnesses a minor car accident. George discovers that one of the victims is a child on her way to perform in the school play. George volunteers to drive the child to the play and forego the movie. Afterwards, George's family and friends say "What a nice guy; that was a really good thing to do. I doubt I would have bothered."

To blame a person for an involuntary action is both practically and theoretically objectionable. The blame can serve no practical purpose, since the person is unable to alter what he does, and furthermore, it is a fundamental maxim of morality that we are not morally required to do what we are unable to do. Therefore, in the case of involuntary action, we withhold blame not only because it serves no useful purpose, but because responding otherwise would be inappropriate.

The point of the preceding vignettes should be obvious. In certain contexts, such as the first two, we use the language of praise and blame for the purpose of modifying behavior (and in the case of young children, to "invite" them into the moral community). We think it a good idea for our pets and children to behave in certain ways, and we believe that certain kinds of verbal encouragement or discouragement will help to produce the desired outcome.[224] It is important to note that such a belief would be irrational if the behavior in question were involuntary. If one really cannot help but act in a certain way, then it would be impossible for praise or blame to affect one's behavior. As Aristotle himself notes:

For they [legislators] impose corrective treatments and penalties on anyone who does vicious actions, unless his action is forced or caused by ignorance that he is not responsible for; and they honor anyone who does fine action; they assume that they will encourage the one and restrain the other. But no one encourages us to do anything that is not

224. Although any parent of a two-year-old will know that these expressions are efficacious in only a limited way

up to us and voluntary; people assume it is pointless to persuade us not to get hot or distressed or hungry or anything else of that sort, since persuasion will not stop it happening to us.[225]

In the last case, George is praised not because we want to modify his behavior (or at least that is not our primary reason for praising him). Rather, we praise him because he deserves our praise. He thought about the situation, about his desire to see a movie, the child's desire to get to the play, and the parent's consternation at being in a car accident. While being aware that he was under no obligation to do much of anything (since no one was hurt, or even stranded), he just thought it would please the child to be able to get to her play. George deserves praise because he decided to do something good beyond what minimal duty demanded. Had George performed this same deed because he was forced or compelled to, we would not find him praiseworthy. In other words, voluntariness seems to be a necessary condition of praise being deserved.[226]

These simple observations suggest that the absence of involuntariness may well be a necessary condition for praise and blame, but for two different reasons. In the case of small children and animals, voluntariness is a necessary condition for praise and blame because in its absence they would be far less likely to change their behavior. If the point of praising and blaming in these cases is only to change behavior, the absence of voluntariness would remove any reason for praise or blame.[227]

What has not been addressed yet, but is worth noting, is how unlikely it is that Aristotle would have thought that praising and blaming alone were appropriate tools for the modification of normal adult behavior. Aristotle discusses at some length official sanctions for breaking the law that involve corrective measures, and he is particularly interested in

225. *See* ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 3, at 1113b23-1113b29.

226. This discussion suggests a possible asymmetry between the significance of the voluntary for blame on the one hand, and praise on the other. Curren argued that voluntariness is not a necessary condition for blame, according to Aristotle, because he wants to allow the possibility that a person is responsible and blameworthy for the harm he causes negligently, and such actions are not, strictly speaking, chosen or voluntary. See Curren, *supra* note 13, at 266. Aristotle can view negligence as blameworthy because the ignorance that is the source of the harm is the agent's own fault. But it seems less likely that a person is praiseworthy for achieving a good consequence when he is ignorant that his act will achieve some good, and the ignorance is his own "fault."

227. Of course this leaves open the possibility that children might deserve praise or blame. The extent to which they are deserve it depends on the development of their moral character, and what it would be reasonable to expect of them.

those who are ignorant of the law:

> Indeed legislators also impose corrective treatments for the ignorance itself, if the person seems to be responsible for the ignorance. A drunk, e.g. pays a double penalty; for the origin is in him, since he controls whether he gets drunk, and his getting drunk is responsible for his ignorance. They also impose corrective treatment on someone who [does a vicious action] in ignorance of some provision of the law he is required [to know]. And they impose it in other cases likewise for any other ignorance that seems to be caused by the agent's inattention; they assume it is up to him not to be ignorant, since he controls whether he pays attention.[228]

Blaming or penalizing an adult, in many circumstances, may fail to alter his behavior, because the person may have reasons for what he does that make it worth suffering the pain of censure. We frequently see this in the legal arena when large corporations are willing to absorb the cost of lawsuits (without altering their practices) as part of the cost of doing business. To penalize ignorance and inattentiveness has, however, a different goal. It aims at getting people to think about what is expected of them, their responsibilities, as reasoning members of the moral community. Only through reasoning can adults change their behavior in a reliable way that is productive of virtue.

We see now that in the case of normal adult action, the absence of involuntariness is a condition for both praise and blame and moral responsibility. The class of voluntary actions is wider than the class of actions for which we are praised or blamed, and both wider and narrower than the class of actions for which we are morally responsible.

This discussion puts us in a position to see why Roberts is mistaken in supposing that, according to Aristotle, one who performs an action voluntarily is morally responsible for that action.[229] Voluntariness is not a sufficient condition for moral responsibility, while it is necessary for many cases of praise and blame.[230] Praise and blame are appropriately used only in circumstances in which it is possible for its recipient to alter her behavior or when it is deserved. Very small children and animals alter their behavior not in response to reasons, but in response to pleasure and

228. ARISTOTLE, supra note 3, at 1114b30-1114a3.

229. Roberts, *supra* note 10, at 26.

230. Apart from the class of action that Curren identifies, see Curren, *supra* note 13, at 273, but Roberts fails to notice, voluntariness seems to be a necessary condition for moral responsibility.

pain. This is why it can be effective to praise or blame children and animals. But to say it is effective is not to say that it is deserved. Praise and blame are deserved for those actions which are performed voluntarily by those who are actually moved by a deliberative argument and by those whose actions are inexcusable.[231] This is to say that, according to Aristotle, praise and blame are deserved by those who are morally responsible for their actions. This conception of responsibility seems not at all alien to moderns.

V.

Because Aristotle believed that expressions of praise and blame are not tantamount to holding an actor responsible for what he does, it is unlikely that Aristotle thought nonhuman animals responsible for what they do, even though we express our approval and disapproval of their behavior and they may act voluntarily. Voluntariness by itself gives no real insight into whether imputations of moral responsibility are appropriate. One reason Aristotle might have held such a view is that whether an actor is held morally responsible depends, in part, on the context in which he acts. For example, agents are not rightly held morally responsible when the context of the relationship is one of enforced submission. We may express approval or disapproval of the actions of those whom we dominate, but in doing so, we aim only at manipulating their behavior, rather than imputing moral responsibility. We would not be justified in imputing moral blame for their actions that fail to meet our standards, since imputation of moral responsibility requires mutual acknowledgment of shared standards. Aristotle recognized that those who are regarded as merely subject to our will - animals, slaves, mere objects - cannot at the same time be regarded as equals, as subject to the same standards in the same way that we are.[232]

231. This last condition would include those who are culpably ignorant of particular features of circumstances. See Curren, *supra* note 13, at 266.

232. Sorabji, in fact, observes that Aristotle realizes we have an interest simply in how the actions of others affect us. SORABJI, *supra* note 2, at 154. He points to a passage in The Politics, ARISTOTLE, THE POLITICS (Carnes Lord trans., Univ. Chi. Press 1984), that gives rationale for Aristotle's for a "just war against wild beasts." Aristotle writes:

Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man. And so, from one point of view, the art of war is a natural art of acquisition, for the art of acquisition includes hunting, an art which we ought to practise against wild beasts, and against men who, though intended by nature to be governed, will not submit; for war of such a kind is naturally just.

ARISTOTLE, THE POLITICS 1256b20-1256b26 (Carnes Lord trans., University of Chicago Press 1984)

When the structure of a relationship is limited to control and submission, there is no place for moral responsibility.[233]

However, the enforced imbalance of power is only part of the explanation of why animals cannot be morally responsible. What ultimately makes ascriptions of moral responsibility to animals unjustifiable is their lack of reason. A full treatment of the relation of reason to moral responsibility is beyond the scope of this essay; I will only gesture at why the absence of reason makes moral responsibility impossible. First, it must be made clear what is not meant by reason in this context. It is not the ability to figure out how to get what one wants; clearly many animals are capable of means-end reasoning. Nor do we mean the related capacity for communication; birds have ways of communicating warnings to one another; dogs can make their need to go outside apparent to their owners. We might even attribute to some animals the ability to weigh reasons, for example, they can delay gratification of some current desire in order to secure a larger payoff later. However, none of these reasoning abilities, which simply involve reactions to circumstances, are sufficient to ground ascriptions of moral responsibility.

Reason may also function in an evaluative capacity, and in exercising this capacity, an agent indicates his understanding of what he does. Since an actor's understanding of the quality of his actions is a central factor in deserving to be held responsible, the absence of the ability to appreciate the quality of one's actions would seem to render the question of moral responsibility moot. However, it is precisely this ability that nonhuman animals lack. While nonhuman animals may take reasons for doing something to be stronger or weaker, they do not understand

---

This passage indicates that it is not because wild beasts voluntarily act badly that we are justified in hunting them; they do not deserve to be killed for what they have done. Rather, it is acceptable to kill them, in Aristotle's view, because of our human needs, for both food and safety. Now if it is morally permissible to treat nonhuman animals not according to what they deserve, but according to human interests, why should we suppose that, when it comes to praising and blaming nonhuman animals, we must responding to what they deserve, hence holding them morally responsible? Sorabji does not address this question directly, but merely affirms his own view that finding animals morally responsible is as viable a position for Aristotle as its opposite.
The issue of how the Greeks treated slaves is somewhat more complicated. Those who were regarded as "natural slaves" would necessarily be regarded (at least partly) as inferior. Those who became slaves as a result of being captured in war need not be regarded in this light.

233. It might also be thought that, to the extent that the law is regarded "simply as a system of stimuli goading the individual by its threats into conformity . . ." that it too leaves no room for moral responsibility for those who are subject to it. H.L.A. HART, PUNISHMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY 44 (1968).

reasons to be better or worse, good or bad. They do not have the ability to evaluate a proposed course of action under the guise of the good. Accordingly, even a trained dog cannot decide not to gratify a current desire or urge because he believes it would not be good to indulge it. Nonhuman animals cannot act on what they regard as good reasons, not express their evaluative stance through action, but can only reveal their training or instincts. Absent the possibility of offering reasons that refer to the good, an actor cannot be a candidate for moral responsibility.

For helpful criticism of previous versions of this paper, I am grateful to Rüdiger Bittner, David Copp, Dan Devereux, John Simmons, and audiences at Bowling Green State University and the University of Richmond, Symposium on "Humans and Other Animals." RICHARD SORABJI, ANIMALS, MINDS AND HUMAN MORALS 111 (Cornell University Press, 1993). ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS (Terence Irwin trans., Hackett, 1985). Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics consists of ten Books divided into chapters. References to this work will be cited to the page in Terence Irwin's translation that also refers to the pagination of Immanuel Bekker's edition of the Greek text (Berlin, 1831). Aristotle does use the adjective aitios, which may be appropriately translated as "responsible," "cause," or "to blame," but he does not modify aitios with any word corresponding to "moral." *See id.* at 1111a29, 1113b23-1113b25, 1113b30-1113b32. *See id.* at Book III, ch. 1. This suggestion does not resolve the aforementioned contradiction. It does, however, make an important contribution to our understanding of Aristotle's views about the voluntary, and how they relate to moral responsibility. Its importance will become apparent in what follows. Irwin holds that the contradiction should not be resolved by denying (D) even though he admits that he does not know where Aristotle explicitly affirms it. Still, Irwin's belief is not arbitrary. Aristotle "... clearly assumes that animals and children are not to be subject to legal and moral sanctions." Terence Irwin, Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle, in ESSAYS ON ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS 125 (Amelie Oksenberg Rorty ed., 1980). He never suggests any radical extension of the recognized class of responsible agents. Irwin proposes to reject (C) and to accept Aristotle's definition of the voluntary, but he aims to show that Aristotle could, on his own terms, justify restricting responsibility to normal adults. See strategy (1), *supra* page 3. If successful, Irwin claims this would yield a genuinely Aristotelian and philosophically respectable theory of moral

responsibility.

Two points should be made in response to this approach; they are related. As Irwin formulates the problem, he does not distinguish between praise and blame on the one hand, and moral responsibility on the other. This conflation saddles Aristotle with a contradiction he does not commit. That is, Irwin would find no contradiction in Aristotle's text if he had made this distinction. Then it would be unproblematic to claim that "A is a proper candidate for praise and blame if and only if A does x voluntarily." Second, since for Irwin voluntariness is a necessary condition for both moral responsibility and praise and blame, in denying that voluntariness is sufficient for moral responsibility, he must also be denying that voluntariness is necessary for praise and blame, but Irwin has no apparent reason for denying this other than to render Aristotle consistent.