Addiction and Weakness of Will

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Chapter 5

Addiction and weakness of will: An integrated account

The preceding chapters identified a conundrum about the possibility of a general theory of responsibility and explored its implications for understanding weak-willed and addiction-centered agency. This conundrum has the following shape. Each of the approaches discussed—volitional (in Chapter 1) and non-volitional (in Chapters 2 and 3)—is meant to offer a comprehensive account of responsibility. Yet, the resulting accounts are well equipped to tackle some central cases, but not others. In particular, no account has been able to conceptualize satisfactorily both weakness of will and addiction. A possible explanation of this upshot (Shoemaker 2011) is that volitional and non-volitional accounts, such as Wallace (1994), Smith (2005), and Arpaly (2003), are after separate target concepts rather than alternative conceptions of the same concept of responsibility. Having considered this explanation in some detail (in Chapter 2), it becomes apparent that a more promising alternative is to formulate a more fundamental conception of responsibility which can integrate insights from the volitional and non-volitional conceptions and explain their apparent disagreements. This is because both volitional and non-volitional conceptions aim to answer the same kind of questions and to address related concerns, an unlikely scenario if they were to flesh out separate responsibility concepts, such as attributability, accountability, and answerability. By formulating a third, more fundamental conception of responsibility, we are also able to offer an integrated account of the phenomena of weakness of will and addiction, and their respective import on responsible agency, building on the Aristotelian account of akrasia developed in Chapter 4.

5.1 **Action as actualization**

A first step in this direction is to identify and explore the models of morally relevant or responsible action implied by alternatives conceptions. "Action" will be employed here in a broad sense to include attitudes: they are something an agent develops, expresses, etc. Building on a distinction between separate models of action proposed by Shapiro (2001),[1] we can see that volitional accounts conceive responsible action in terms of production, while non-volitional accounts conceive it in terms of assertion.[2] On the first model, the point of action is to bring about an effect. Voluntary control over the production of this effect is essential, if the agent is to be held responsible for it. On the second model, the point of action is to assert the agent's evaluative stance. A reflective commitment to this stance is clearly more significant than control over the means of assertion. This explains why voluntary control appears as central on volitional accounts, but peripheral on non-volitional ones. It also enables us to appreciate that these accounts are not mutually exclusive. For the models of action they build on are not mutually exclusive: many responsible actions assert the agent's evaluative stance by bringing about some effect.

This speaks in favor of a more fundamental model of action which, to acknowledge the Aristotelian inspiration of this project, I would like to

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[1] Shapiro (2001) distinguishes between three models of action in order to explain some disagreements within normative ethical theory and to clarify the interest of Kantian constructivism. The tripartite distinction on offer here is not meant to map onto that proposed by Shapiro. The two projects occupy different levels of analysis, normative ethics, and moral psychology. More importantly, they serve different objectives: as indicated earlier in the discussion (see, for instance, Chapter 2, Section 2.4) the Aristotelian theory of responsible agency that is developed here aims to be comprehensive by reconciling aspects of constructivist, as well as recognitional views of practical reason in general and reasons for action in particular. And so, I take the model of action championed in Shapiro (2001), action as participation, which is constructivist, to be less fundamental than the Aristotelian model of action as actualization that will be defended here.

[2] Two non-volitional accounts were critically examined in earlier chapters: Smith's rational relations, and Arpaly's quality-of-will view. The model discussed here, action as assertion, is meant to cover the presuppositions that both alternatives share in common qua non-volitional accounts. Thus, although I am prepared to acknowledge that action as expression could be a better fitting label with respect to Arpaly's view, since this view aims to go beyond the articulate or consciously held evaluative judgments of agents to include their whole motivational sets, nothing of significance hangs on this choice of nomenclature.

call action as actualization. Here is an example: by writing well, a person becomes and continues to be a good writer (assertive aspect) and the works she creates are good (productive aspect). As the example clearly shows, the actualization model offers a seamless common ground for the appraisal of both assertive and productive aspects of an action. In so doing, it indicates a possible solution to the conundrum about the possibility of a general theory of responsibility recalled at the start of this section. This is because the actualization model supports a more fundamental notion of agential control which applies equally to the productive and assertive aspects of an action. And so, it becomes possible to uphold both the parity of actions and attitudes as objects of moral appraisal and the important intuition according to which it is unfair to hold a person responsible for things that are not up to her, the two theoretical desiderata that jointly define a good answer to the underlying question motivating the present inquiry: What is the best way to conceptualize responsibility?

Before expanding on the implications of the actualization model to addressing outstanding issues about addiction and weakness of will, I shall say more about the Aristotelian background of the proposed conceptualization.[3] This would make clearer the difference between the notion of agential control supported by the actualization model and that of voluntary control supported by the production model.

Aristotle's theory of action allows for two kinds of actions: productions (actions as doings) and actions proper (actions as self-actualizations or coming to being). Unsurprisingly, productions are conceived as derivative actions, the point of which is to facilitate actions proper. Naturally, this is not to say that actions proper are not supposed to produce any effects in the world. Instead, the idea is that, in addition to this productive

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[3] The following discussion is not meant as a comprehensive exposé of Aristotle's theory of action, let alone a scholarly contribution to the vast exegetical literature on the topic. Instead, the ambition is to articulate the sense in which the proposed conception is in continuity with a fecund philosophical tradition, Aristotelianism, whilst at the same time being an original contribution to a contemporary debate. Having said that, the outline of Aristotle's views on action here I based on Radoilska (2007), a monograph in which I engage more closely both with ancient sources and alternative scholarly interpretations of Aristotle's works in the recent literature.

aspect, the achievement of an external end, actions proper are also ends in themselves, that is to say, the performance of such actions is already an achievement in itself, independently of whether they also manage to bring about a desirable outcome or not. In other words, productions are incomplete actions rather than actions proper being unproductive.

To appreciate the distinctive feature of actions proper as worthwhile in their own right, not only as pursuits of further valuable ends beyond their very performance, let us consider an analogy. Virtue, like literary talent, is a virtual, as opposed to actual moral viz. aesthetic worth, a good "in potentia" only that calls to be brought into the world.

Arguably, this analogy holds true of responsible agency broadly conceived. For on Aristotle's account human beings are incomplete in a way that no other biological species is, and this is because of their capacity for rational agency. They have the unique task to make themselves up on the go, as it were, through their actions. Hence, the so-called Function argument, which is often taken to show how incorrigibly essentialist Aristotle's philosophy is, does in fact indicate the opposite—a space, and a need for active involvement in order to become a person, an actual human being with a history and character of his or her own, a member of the moral community, fit to both give and receive moral appraisal, to engage in and be the target of the full range of participant reactive attitudes, including praise and gratitude, resentment and blame.[4] We may, of course, refer to this actualization as self-creation as long as we do not get muddled with the idea of a self-creation practically ex nihilo that was put forth by the twentieth-century existentialists, such as Sartre (2003, 2007). In contrast, on an Aristotelian picture, actualization is made possible by constitutive constraints: a human being can only become a person, a moral agent of some character or other, or indeed fail to do so. Thus, actualization is best understood as self-fulfillment, an exercise of natural autonomy rather than an act of self-creation.

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[4] The Function argument can be found in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.2. As indicated earlier, the argument is often taken to represent a form of naturalistic fallacy, whereby "human flourishing" and the corresponding "duties of a human being" are inappropriately derived from "human nature." For an explanation why this is not the case, see Radoilska (2007, pp. 233–254).

To illustrate what I mean by "natural autonomy," let us briefly consider the first known application of the word "autonomy" to a human being. In Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, the Chorus reproaches the main character for burying the body of her brother whom the polis has decided to deny a burial for being a traitor. In so doing, they ask Antigone whether she takes herself to be "autonomous" viz. in a position to give herself a law. The point made by the Chorus is that only the polis, the body of citizens jointly can appropriately undertake such self-legislative function. By deciding what is right and wrong on her own, regardless of her city's will, Antigone commits an act of hubris, the pivotal fault that turns an otherwise good character into a tragic hero. So, unlike Antigone's tragic autonomy, natural autonomy is a law that recognizes the "self" it emanates from and applies to for what it is instead of trying to turn it into something else. It perfects, instead of destroying this self.

Thus, natural autonomy is best conceived in contrast to arbitrariness and artificiality: unlike artifacts, natural things are ends in themselves. By implication, the natural autonomy of human beings, whom Aristotle famously defined as both "rational" and "political," would be at odds with the unlimited, and meaningless, control that is implied by Sartrean self-creation. Human beings speak a language. They live in a community of agents, whose task is to make it possible that every agent can—both individually and jointly with others—engage in meaningful self-actualization.

This Aristotelian way of grounding our capacity for rational agency in living together with others is far from being constructivist, let alone metaphorical. Consider, for instance, courage and justice, two virtues of necessity, as Aristotle dubs them in the *Politics* 7.13–15 for their exercise is called for because others are being threatening and unjust with respect to us or third parties. What is more, even unbound or free virtues, such as friendship, and the virtues of the intellect in general are also dependent on others' appreciation of and willingness to support, if not to take part in, their actualization. Natural autonomy at the heart of the actualization model is both more visceral and down-to-earth than constructivist alternatives.[5]

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[5] See, however, Korsgaard (2008) for an interesting constructivist approach which also integrates some aspects of Aristotle's theory of action.

By conceiving virtues as ethical or aesthetic or epistemic etc. values *in potentia* that only come to life through actions proper, the actualization model is able to show how agential control and self-control are intimately entwined in a way that the production model fails to grasp. For it construes the notion of voluntary control as one-directional dependence from agent to world as though the only point of self-control in action is to back up control over the effects of this action. Yet as the parity of actions and attitudes as legitimate objects of moral appraisal established throughout this inquiry points to, agential control might be best understood in terms of interdependence, a dialectic shaping both action and agent. The actualization model provides us with a non-mysterious way to conceptualize this interdependence: through the exercise of control over things in the world we not only learn how to exercise self-control in action. Being repeatedly successful or unsuccessful in this respect leads to us developing certain dispositions which in turn make the future exercise of self-control with respect to some actions either superfluous or futile. As we shall see in the subsequent sections, this final point will prove of great significance for disentangling addiction and weakness of will from other forms of less than successful, yet responsible agency.

5.2 Success in action and the guise of the good

Catching a train, getting a drink of water, greeting an acquaintance—every intentional action is a form of success, that of doing what one is minded to do. This basic form of success in action is different from another, more conspicuous one, to which it is often assimilated—bringing about a desired outcome. Yet these two forms of success may easily come apart even in the simplest of actions: a person boards the wrong train, or gets a drink of water which happens to be poisonous, or puts an acquaintance in an awkward situation by greeting her, instead of being civil. In all three cases the agent does as intended, but fails to bring about the intended outcome. Alternatively, the agent could bring about the intended outcome and yet fail to do as intended: a person ends up drinking water as planned in spite of akratically ordering wine, for, as it turns out, there is nothing but water to be had on this train. A third form of success becomes apparent when we look at intentional actions as more

or less appropriate answers to the question of what an agent should do. This question brings together a variety of considerations, including: the significance of individual actions in the context of a person's commitments, projects and obligations, the demands others can reasonably address to her, and the constraints under which she has to act. As in the previous cases, being successful at answering the question of what one should do does not imply, nor is it implied by, success in either doing what one is minded to do or bringing about a desired outcome: catching the right train could still be a wrong thing to do, just as a failure to get on it as planned could be an act of courage, all the more admirable for being unplanned.

In light of these remarks, we can see that with respect to actions "less than successful" could have a very specific meaning, denoting actions that are successful in one or other, but not all three ways identified earlier. So, when I wrote at the end of the previous section that addiction and weakness of will are distinctive kinds of less than successful, though responsible agency I was applying in anticipation the term of art just introduced.

Less than successful actions are rather difficult to spot on the production and assertion models. For each of these models attempts to tackle the variety of success in action by reducing alternatives to the one success form which best fits the kind of action it takes to be fundamental. On the production model, success in action adds up to bringing about an intended outcome. Conversely, on the assertion model, a successful action is a good answer to the question of what the agent should do on a specific occasion. By being reductive, both approaches fail to capture the complexity of success in action. As a result, they tend to recast instances of less than successful agency, including weakness of will and addiction, either as wholly unsuccessful to the point of raising the question whether intentional agency has even taken place, or as wholly successful to the point of losing sight of what makes these phenomena perplexing not only to an informed observer, but more importantly to the agent herself.

In contrast, the actualization model is able to do justice to the variety, and complexity, of success in action. For it is not meant to replace the two other models, but to integrate them into a unified picture of responsible

agency—unified, though not homogenous. The third form of success in action, doing what one is minded to do, which the actualization model brings into relief, is more fundamental than the other two—bringing about an intended outcome and answering well the question of what one should do by acting in a particular way. What makes it more fundamental, however, is that it offers a common ground linking the two less central forms of success in action; it does not supersede them.

This triadic structure of success in action is borne out of the phenomenology of intentional agency. In most ordinary cases, such as catching a train, getting a drink of water, and greeting an acquaintance success in action would cover all three senses: if successful, an agent would typically bring about a desired outcome by doing what she is minded to do and her doing so would be a fair answer to the general question of what she should do. It takes a thought experiment, like the examples at the start of this section, to disentangle these forms of success even at the level of one-step everyday actions. A major advantage of the actualization model is that it can explain both why the expectation that a successful action amounts to achievement in all three senses is legitimate and how some intentional actions may nevertheless frustrate this expectation by being less than successful, though not entirely unsuccessful.

The expectation at issue may be formulated as follows.

(1) At its very basic, success in action involves two things: (i) an agent's trying to achieve or get something done; and (ii), her endeavor coming to fruition.

(2) The possibility of different forms of success in action gets introduced with the second element, a success condition that may be specified in different ways.

(3) However, the first element is what makes success in action itself possible, and that is intending.

(4) Looking back at intending from its point of completion, which is success in action, it becomes clear that:
Intending is just acting under the guise of the good: trying to achieve something is to aim at success in achieving it.

The expectation turns out to a version of the thesis that intending or pursuing an end implies perceiving it as good in some respect—hence, the term "the Guise of the Good," by which it is frequently referred to following Velleman (1992).[6]

The Guise of the Good seems to be at odds with the idea that weak-willed actions are performed against one's better judgment. It also seems at odds with the view of addiction-centered agency sketched earlier in this book: for, on this view, addiction involves persisting with some pursuits that the agent no longer considers as good in any respect, that is, not even pleasant (De Quincey 2002, ch. 2). This apparent tension is typically resolved in one of the following ways: the first is to argue that the Guise of the Good offers a misleading model of intentional action, to which weakness of will provides a clear counterexample; the second is to show that weakness of will is consistent with the Guise of the Good. Stocker (1979) and Velleman (1992) are examples of the former strategy, Tenenbaum (2007) and Raz (2011) of the latter. The point of contention is whether perceiving what one attempts to achieve as good in some respect goes beyond a minimal, purely analytic understanding of "good" that is already contained in the notion of achievement as something worth achieving viz. something worth the agent's while viz. something that the agent considers as valuable or good in some respect. Contesters of the Guise of the Good have no quarrel with this minimal, and uninformative, interpretation. What they want to deny that the Guise of the Good establishes a more robust or substantive link between intending something and judging it to be worth doing viz. good in some respect. For instance, Stocker (1979, p. 744) voices the challenge of interest to us in the following way:

> Through spiritual or physical tiredness, through accidie, through weakness of body, through illness, through general apathy, through despair, through inability

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[6] Following Garcia (1990), I will assume that intending is more fundamental than acting with an intention and acting intentionally and so will use the term "intending" to cover both. This is because a distinction between intentions preceding actions and intentions embedded in actions is not central for the version of the Guise of the Good defended here, for I take it that the thesis should cover both. See, however, Raz (2011, ch. 4) for a strategy which heavily relies on this distinction to qualify the Guise of the Good as applicable only to some, but not all intentions.

to concentrate, through a feeling of uselessness or futility, and so on, one may feel less and less motivated to seek what is good. One's lessened desire need not signal, much less be the product of, the fact that, or one's belief that, there is less good to be obtained or produced, as in the case of a universal Weltschmertz. Indeed, a frequent added defect of being in such 'depressions' is that one sees all the good to be won or saved and one lacks the will, interest, desire, or strength.

To recap, Stocker's challenge to the Guise of the Good, substantively interpreted, is that perceiving an end as worthwhile or good may easily coexist with no intention to pursuing it. By contrast, Velleman (1992, pp. 21–22) construes the challenge looking from the opposite side of the contested relationship, intentions in the absence of positive evaluation:

> Being in despair doesn't prevent me from being moved to act, however. I am moved to stay at home, refuse all invitations, keep the shades drawn, and privately curse the day I was born. I may even be moved to smash some crockery, though not in order to feel better, mind you, since trying to feel better seems just as ludicrous a project as any other. (Someone who smashes crockery in order to feel better didn't feel all that bad to begin with.) What's more, I engage in these actions not only out of despair but also in light of and on the grounds of despair. That is, despair is part of my reason as well as part of my motive for acting. But do I regard my actions, in light of my despair, as good or desirable or positive things to do? Far from it. I am determined never to do a good or desirable or positive thing again.

These two lines of critique, Stocker's and Velleman's, are often considered in the literature as representing two separate challenges leveled at the same target, the Guise of the Good. For instance, in his response to the challenges, Tenenbaum (2007) takes it that they refer to different categories of actions posing different kinds of difficulties for a proponent of the Guise of the Good: accidie and akrasia. While instances of the former, in tune with Stocker's eloquent description, are defined by a kind of perplexing inability to pursue what one clearly appreciates as worth pursuing, instances of the latter, in tune with Velleman's vignette, are pursuits undertaken in the knowledge of their worthlessness, if not in virtue of their being so disvalued.

Tenenbaum's reply to the former challenge is to show that the Guise of the Good can make sense of accidie. In a nutshell, although agents affected by accidie appreciate some pursuits as worthwhile, they do not appreciate any pursuit of theirs as worthy of success. And so, accidie proves consistent with the Guise of the Good. Cast in the terms of the

thesis that flow from the actualization model, the solution takes the following form: since an agent in a state of accidie does not aim at success in achieving anything, she does not try to achieve anything. Intending is absent, for no valuing takes place from the agent's first-personal or practical as opposed to her internalized third-personal or reflective perspective.[7]

Similarly, Tenenbaum's reply to the latter challenge is to show that the Guise of the Good can also integrate akrasia. In essence, akratic agents have a merely oblique, or indirect cognition of the value of the course of action that they judge to be better; what's more, their considered judgment is overturned under the influence of a more vivid and immediate, although misleading appearance of value. In other words, akratic intending is still acting under the guise of the good, albeit a confused one.

Tenenbaum's dual reply has the merit to point out that the Guise of the Good does not have to state a straight and simple link between intending and valuing in order to count as a substantive, informative claim about the psychology of action. For nothing in the thesis itself justifies the expectation of uniform simplicity throughout the domain of intentional viz. responsible agency so that even Satan should turn out to be sappy, to paraphrase Velleman's charge against an influential earlier statement of the Guise of the Good (Anscombe 1963). However, by responding separately to Stocker (1979) and Velleman (1992), Tenenbaum fails to acknowledge that these two lines of argument are intimately related and refer to the same cluster of cases, which I termed earlier less than successful actions. For these cases often combine both sides of the challenge: intending without valuing and valuing without intending. In particular, disvaluing what one pursues while valuing what one doesn't is a fair account of the phenomenology of both akrasia and addiction. And so, a successful response to the Stocker–Velleman challenge should explain how these two sides of less than successful agency may coexist under the guise of the good. I turn to this task in Section 5.3.

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[7] On the distinction between these two perspectives, see Chapter 3, Section 3.3. I say more about accidie and its relationship to depression in Radoilska (2013a).

5.3 **Less than successful actions**

To capture the nature and significance of this category of actions, let us first consider Aristotle's solution to a related puzzle which flows from adopting a substantive version of the Guise of the Good, like the one implied by the actualization model. This puzzle becomes apparent when we look more closely at the term of "good" in the Guise of the Good: Does it refer to a purely subjective, first-personal evaluation on the part of the agent at the time of action? Alternatively, does it have to equally pass some further test, such as being worthwhile from a third-personal perspective, be it an informed observer's, or the agent's own reflective stance? In Aristotle's terms: is it the good itself or merely an appearance of the good that constitutes the proper end or object of wish that motivates action?

Here is Aristotle's suggestion:

> . . . absolutely and in truth the good is the object of wish, but for each person the apparent good; that which is in truth an object of wish is an object of wish to the good man, while any chance thing may be so to the bad man, as in the case of bodies also the things that are in truth wholesome are wholesome for bodies in good condition, while for those that are diseased other things are wholesome—or bitter or sweet or hot or heavy, and so on; since the good man judges each class of things rightly and, and in each the truth appears to him. For each state of character has its own ideas of the noble and the pleasant, and perhaps the good man differs from others most by seeing the truth in each class of things, being as it were the norm and measure of them. In most things the error seems to be due to pleasure; for it appears a good when it is not. We therefore choose the pleasant as good, and avoid pain as evil.
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> (*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4)

By bringing together the subjective and objective perspectives on "good" in the Guise of the Good, Aristotle's suggestion has direct implications for defining success in action and especially for establishing the scope of less than successful actions. In particular, it enables us to flesh out the intuitive, yet elusive link between intending and valuing as a distinctive kind of future-oriented desirability judgment whose logical form is laid bare in the sentence-type of the Latin textbook example: Delenda est Carthago. Unsurprisingly, the standard translation—"Carthage must be destroyed"—does not do justice to the form of thought of interest to

us: we do not have an exact equivalent of the passive periphrastic, the grammatical structure that underpins the example. The urgency of the specified action that this structure communicates is not that of sheer necessity or a "must." Instead, it derives from a judgment recognizing an object as being of a certain kind, such as to require specific action to be taken by anyone who makes that judgment. And so, the judgment under consideration is clearly not a theoretical one: it is either a statement of plan or invitation for action. To return to the Carthage example for illustration: the Phoenician city, which is the object of judgment, is recognized as so powerful that its sheer existence poses a threat. The fact that the basis of judgment, Carthage being powerful, is not explicitly mentioned in the example is immaterial since the suggestion that Carthage be destroyed is clearly presented as a natural consequence of its being the kind of city that merits destruction. What is more, it is also presented as a forthcoming event, something bound to happen: the gerundive "delenda" functions here as a future participle suggesting not only the fittingness of Carthage's destruction, but also its imminence. Yet, this is not a probability judgment: Carthage will not destroy itself. The future participle is passive indicating the need for action and for an agent who commits to bringing about the desired event, the destruction of Carthage. Who should this agent be? Anyone who recognizes Carthage as the kind of city whose destruction is called for, anyone who makes or agrees with the distinctive future-oriented desirability judgment expressed in "Delenda est Carthago."

With the Carthage example in mind, let us return to Aristotle's solution to the apparent tension between subjective and objective interpretations of "good" in the Guise of the Good. Judging what is good or worth pursuing defines the agent just as much as it defines the course of her intended action: success in action presupposes that assertion and production come together. This natural link between valuing and intending also explains why the question of what an agent should do is not extraneous to assessing whether her actions are intentional: on its own, bringing about a desirable outcome is insufficient to account for a fully successful action or, for that matter, a less than successful one. For instance, if Carthage is not the kind of city whose destruction is called

for, committing to the judgment Delenda est Carthago is not going to lead to success in action. Although the Romans did eventually succeed in destroying Carthage and so they did bring about the desired outcome, once achieved, its utter undesirability became apparent: what was meant to mark Rome's glorious triumph over a long-standing ferocious enemy went down in history as an example of callous cruelty.

This, however, is not the kind of less than successful agency that is involved in addiction and weakness of will. In addition to being mistaken about what they should do, weak-willed agents and addicts are at least dimly aware of making the mistake that they make. What's more, in the central and most problematic cases, that is, akrasia as primary failure of intentional agency analyzed in Chapter 4, this mistake is committed with eyes wide open. In these latter cases, intending without valuing is inseparable from valuing without intending. And, in light of the triadic structure of success in action that the actualization model brings into relief, we are able to detect a loose connection that forms between intending and valuing even in these instances of strict or clear-eyed akrasia so as to spur purposive action. This is due to the entanglement of two concomitant desirability judgments which seem able to cancel out one another's obvious deficiencies: intending without valuing and valuing without intending. Yet, as argued earlier (see Chapter 4), akrasia is a poor resolution of an unnecessary conflict. We are now in a position to say more about why this is so: akratic actions are successful in terms of production to the exact degree that they are unsuccessful in terms of assertion. For an akratic action is not just an achievement that one disvalues, but something achieved in virtue of being disvalued. Akratic actions are necessarily less than successful actions.

This specificity of akrasia helps put into perspective skepticism about it being compatible with fully intentional agency, which might have been prompted by the earlier claim that akrasia is a primary failure of intentional agency. This skeptic impression derives from the entanglement between successful production and unsuccessful assertion that constitutes an akratic action. For in central cases at least this entanglement makes it impossible to tell whether the agent is actually doing what she is minded to do—impossible not just for an observer but crucially for

the agent herself. Nevertheless, success in action is the norm, not the mark of intending. Being necessarily less than successful, akratic actions are rightly considered derivative, even parasitic with respect to actions whose success is a genuine possibility. This, however, does not preclude them from being sufficiently intended as to call for full-blown moral appraisal, well within the limits of responsible agency.

5.4 **Concluding remarks: The offspring of akrasia**

Having articulated the structure of akratic actions as necessarily less than successful, I will now aim to show that this structure also applies, mutatis mutandis, to addiction and not only weakness of will. To do so, let us first take stock of the puzzles about addiction we ended up with while trying to make sense of addiction-centered agency from either a volitional or a non-volitional perspective (see Chapters 1 and 2). In essence, these puzzles divide into two kinds: uncertainty about the boundaries of intentional viz. responsible agency, on the one hand, and conflicting intuitions about the wrongness of addiction, on the other. The first kind of puzzles derives from the idea that a degree of compulsion is a defining feature of addictive behaviors. At first blush, this idea generates the following plausible conclusion: compulsion diminishes control over one's actions; therefore, it warrants at least partial excuse for addictive behaviors (Wallace 1994, 1999). Yet, a closer look at the phenomenology of addictive behavior, as well as first-personal memoirs of people with addiction clearly indicates that addictions are rarely unmanageable (Ainslie 2001; Wurtzel 2002). Not only are cues rarely irresistible; more importantly, addiction-motivated behavior is compatible with successful planning (Levy 2006). This could suggest that the so-called cravings are not as different from any other motivationally efficacious desire (cf. Foddy and Savulescu 2006, 2010). Following this line of thought, addiction-motivated behavior could be reconsidered as a standard case of fully responsible agency, that is, intentional agency in the strong sense of having a plan rather than merely having a goal (Bratman 1984). But if so, we reach the opposite conclusion: being motivated by an addiction may sometimes constitute an aggravating rather an extenuating circumstance (Watson 1999; Morse 2000). That is to say, subjective irresistibility

may be construed, on the one hand, as an excuse, if not a complete exemption from negative moral appraisal and on the other, as the result of willful—and reprehensible—self-indulgence.

This upshot leads us to the second kind of puzzles about addiction, which centers on the idea that addiction cannot be but wrong. In other words, should addiction-motivated behavior turn out to be a legitimate object for moral appraisal, this appraisal would necessarily take a negative form, in terms of blame and resentment. Alternatively, if addiction-motivated behavior falls outside the domain of responsible agency, it would still represent a wrong, more specifically, a blameless wrongdoing. Yet, the wrongness of addiction proves difficult to pin down. For instance, looking at Wallace (1994) it might be tempting to think that the wrongness of addiction is just a side effect of the kind of examples discussed: breaches of obligations in the context of addiction. However, such a conclusion would seem premature. Wallace (1994) makes a good case for the claim that addiction in general is likely to lead to disengagement from one's obligations. This claim is also supported by recent empirical studies and some first-personal memoirs of addiction (e.g. De Quincey 2002; Wurtzel 2002; Poland and Graham 2011). The point that these very different kinds of literature seem to concur on is that addiction, by its very nature, tends to override normative considerations that would otherwise be seen as compelling—by others who find themselves in a similar situation or even by the agent with addiction at an earlier stage when addiction has not yet taken hold of her life. Even so, a crucial puzzle about the wrongness of addiction remains unaddressed: Could this wrongness be, at least in principle, captured from within the third-personal perspective of an informed and impassive observer, such as Mr. Astley commenting on the Gambler's downfall (Dostoevsky 2008)? Alternatively, should the first-personal perspective of an agent with addiction be considered as indispensable when deciding whether a breach of obligation has even taken place? Compelling reasons speak in favor of both options. The very fact that normative issues about addiction-motivated behavior are exclusively focused on whether it may, in some circumstances, be worthy of excuse or exemption indicates that an addict's own evaluative perspective is taken to be

tangential for the purposes of her moral appraisal. In other words, there seems to be an almost overwhelming assumption in favor of treating addictions as disordered appetites (Watson 2004) rather than strong idiosyncratic desires. And yet, as Watson (1999, p. 610) points out in the context of criminal responsibility: "the criminal law can be legitimate only if it is justifiable to those who are subjected to its demands. And it can meet the condition only if its subjects have reason to comply. The recognition of the space of agent-centered prerogatives, I suggest, is the law's acknowledgement of its own moral jurisdiction."

This conclusion holds true for responsibility in general and moral responsibility in particular. As we have seen in the earlier discussion (especially Chapter 2, Section 2.4), blame and resentment are reactive attitudes that are appropriately addressed only to full members of the moral community. But to be treated as a full member of the moral community means to have one's evaluative standpoint considered as equally significant as the standpoint that warrants one's negative moral appraisal. That is to say, blame and resentment are only fitting when they are addressed in a way that does not preclude, but on the contrary facilitates the expression of counter-justification, showing that blame and resentment were in fact unwarranted to start off with. This open-endedness is a distinctive feature of reactive attitudes as opposed to objective ones: reactive attitudes, such as resentment convey negative moral appraisal in order to re-engage the person that they are leveled at as a member of moral community. In this respect, negative moral appraisal validates a person's moral standing just as much, of not stronger than positive moral appraisal. This, however, is not the case with objective attitudes, the point of which is to solve a problem, to place a distance between ourselves and a source of threat, such as the human-feasting Satanists from Montmarquet's vignette (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4). To recap, the negative moral appraisal that almost uniformly attaches to addiction does not exhibit the kind of open-endedness that distinguishes reactive from objective attitudes. And yet, the fact that, like Mr. Astley's invective it is often addressed to the addicts themselves sits uncomfortably with the hypothesis that addicts have by default been confined to the margins of the moral community.

Attempts to give priority to the first-personal stance of an agent with addiction are marred with similar difficulties. For instance, Frankfurt's influential account of addiction (Chapter 1, Section 1.3) clearly posits that addiction becomes a problem of responsible agency only in so far as it is perceived as a problem by the addicted agent herself. On this view, a Happy Addict who endorses her addiction and the way that it shapes her life and actions is deemed as fit for success in action as an agent who gives due weight to the various normative considerations that the Happy Addict is bound to neglect. This outcome is counterintuitive: the fact that by the end of the novel the Gambler, to return to Dostoevsky's memorable work, eventually loses sight of what really matters and instead is fully absorbed by the vicissitudes of playing roulette looks like a worst kind of defeat, definitely not an exemplar of success in action. What on Frankfurtian terms counts as Happy Addiction clearly leads to less than successful agency to a considerably greater degree than Unhappy Addiction in the earlier period when the Gambler is still plagued by guilt for neglecting his intellectual pursuits and the company of his loved one. Once we begin to consider the addicts' own evaluative stance in earnest, we make a puzzling discovery: the apparent analogue of wholehearted commitment to one's pursuits, which is typically associated with success in action, in the context of addiction bodes—on the contrary—ultimate defeat in action. In light of the actualization model developed in this chapter, we are in a position to see that this is the central paradox, from which derive both kinds of puzzles considered earlier: whether addiction is compatible with intentional agency and how to account for the apparent wrongness of addiction.

The realization that this is the central paradox of addiction has an immediate payoff. It explains why subjective irresistibility of a course of action that an agent contemplates prompts two radically opposite conceptualizations depending on whether addiction is present or not: compulsion in the one instance, moral incapacity, volitional necessity, or practical identity in the other (Williams 1995; Korsgaard 1996; Frankfurt 1998; see Chapter 3, Section 3.3). Compulsion is a threat to intentional agency. It affects not only the ability to act in light of reasons but also its less visible counterpart, the ability to partake in shaping

the space of valid reasons by engaging with the moral community from within. By contrast, moral incapacity and cognates are instances of subjective irresistibility that flow from an agent's well-attuned evaluative stance, that is, from the fact that she is a competent and mature valuer whose intentions are well-integrated instead of being conflicted in a way that makes success in action all but impossible for her.

These observations bring into relief the interest of explaining addiction in terms of akrasia, on the Aristotelian view fleshed out in the course of this inquiry. For, this view is able not only to account for the various puzzles raised by the phenomenology of addiction, but also to provide us with a cogent normative framework avoiding the unsatisfactory dichotomy of a medical versus a criminal model of responsibility for addiction. The conclusions supported by the argument of this book can be summarized as follows:

(1) Like weakness of will, addiction is a secondary failure of intentional agency, which derives from akrasia, a primary failure of intentional agency that makes all relevant actions necessarily less than successful. For an akratic action is defined by a structural tension between success as production and success as assertion. This structural tension becomes apparent when we apply to akrasia the general model of responsible or morally relevant action proposed here—action as actualization.

(2) Unlike weakness of will, addiction is associated with a sense of compulsion rather than merely giving in to some guilty pleasure or other. The contrast is frequently posited in recent philosophical works on weakness of will. However, no positive account has been offered as to why we should distinguish the two phenomena in this way, though of course skeptics about weakness of will have presented arguments for the insignificance of this contrast and proponents have aimed to refute these arguments (Radoilska 2013b). Applied to addiction and weakness of will, the actualization model provides such a positive account. Weak-willed pursuits depend on being perceived as pleasurable, albeit unworthy. Once a weak-willed agent experiences these pursuits as fundamentally disappointing sources of pleasure,

she also grows out of her weakness of will. By contrast, addictive behavior transcends the experience of pleasure initially associated with the object of addiction. As illustrated by De Quincey (2002) and Dostoevsky (2008), addiction is bound to survive addicts' recurrent experience of their addictions as harmful, distressing, and painful. In this respect, addiction is not just a recalcitrant form of akrasia, which is essentially true of weakness of will, but more importantly a form of akrasia that is utterly devoid of pleasure. Paradoxically, or ironically, being devoid of pleasure is what makes addiction compulsive: the pursuit of a specter of pleasure is bound to be insatiable. In this sense, addiction could be said to involve a disoriented, if not a disordered appetite.

(3) The difference between weakness of will and addiction is not one of degree, but of kind. Looking again at De Quincey (2002) and Dostoevsky (2008), the pleasure that could be derived from the object of future addiction is already blown out of proportion before the onset of addiction and even before any actual first-hand experience of this object. And so, addiction arguably presents a more radical category of less than successful agency than weakness of will: addictive behavior aims at success in action at the expense of action.

(4) The main implication of the proposed analysis with respect to responsibility for addiction is to assuage skepticism about the use of evaluative and especially ethical vocabulary in this context. For instance, some authors aim to avoid framing problems of addiction in explicitly evaluative terms since they consider that this would further stigmatize people with addiction. In light of the preceding discussion, we can appreciate why such a strategy would be necessarily counterproductive; it would feed into the objectifying attitudes implicit in the two partial models of responsible action—action as production and action as assertion—that make both volitional and non-volitional accounts of addiction ultimately disappointing. In contrast, negative moral appraisal strengthens the person with addiction by reengaging with her as an apt valuer that could also act under the guise of

the good, not only the apparent—and disappearing—good of her addiction. For, as argued throughout this work, evaluative immaturity is what necessarily leads to less than successful pursuits, such as akrasia, weakness of will, and addiction. At the same time, however, evaluative immaturity is always object- or pursuit-centered rather than global: less than successful agency still takes place under the guise of the good. And so success in action is never completely out of sight.