

## **An aristotelian account of autonomy**

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## **An Aristotelian Account of Autonomy**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to set out an Aristotelian account of individual autonomy. Individual autonomy is the capacity of the individual to make and act upon judgments for which he is held morally accountable. This sense of autonomy may be contrasted to a number of other senses. Of these, the most important are political or legal autonomy and Kantian principled autonomy. Political or legal autonomy concerns the environment in which an individual operates. It exists where individuals are able to operate reasonably freely.<sup>1</sup> For the most part we will not consider this sense except insofar as it is necessary to explain the importance placed on respecting individual autonomy. Kantian principled autonomy has been described recently by Onora O'Neill in a series of writings.<sup>2</sup> On this account, autonomy is seen as a characteristic of the principle behind action rather than of action *per se* and is not a characteristic of agents at all.

O'Neill developed her Kantian account of autonomy in response to difficulties she perceives in the individual view of autonomy, the view that it is an attribute of most adults and their actions. She says its central difficulty lies in reconciling a naturalist view of action, in which human action is seen as due to natural states of beliefs and desires, with the view that such action nonetheless is morally of great or supreme value. In order to attribute autonomy to most adults and their actions, someone holding to an individual view of autonomy will need to define autonomy in terms of criteria that are generally shared. These are usually naturalist. For example, autonomous actions will be defined as those that are unfettered and arise from an agent's desires. O'Neill holds that excessive weight is

placed upon such minimal and implausible conceptions of individual autonomy. This difficulty is seen in situations where the principle of respect for autonomy is thought to bear as much upon bad, poorly thought through and habitual decisions as it does upon good and fully rational decisions. It is difficult to see how autonomy can be morally special once it has been defined in terms of natural features that are widely shared. How could actions arising from the unfettered desires of someone who is acting immorally or amorally be thought to be of moral importance? The Aristotelian account we will consider here is not vulnerable to this criticism largely because it is naturalist through and through. Someone who holds to the account would not accept O'Neill's implicit assumption that moral considerations are separate from prudential considerations.

## **2. Autonomy: beliefs and puzzles**

Aristotle's method has been extensively discussed. In the discussion of an ethical concept or issue, Aristotle draws upon the different, credible views and beliefs about it. Views are credible if they are held either by many people or by the wise.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle also requires that we attend to relevant puzzles. Indeed, inquiry will be stimulated by their presence. The puzzles may arise because credible views conflict with each other or because they do not give a complete explanation.

A satisfactory account of an ethical concept or issue will enable us to explain the different views and beliefs and resolve the puzzles. It will enable us to show which beliefs are true and which are false. It will also enable us to show why beliefs that are false appeared to be true. Where there are puzzles of incomplete knowledge it will enable us to offer new, correct, beliefs. This is a somewhat over-linear description of Aristotle's

method. The process is far more fluid than this, with new puzzles emerging alongside new beliefs.

There seem to be a number of sources for the views of most people and of wise people on the concept of autonomy. The views of wise people are reasonably easy to elicit either from direct discussion of the topic or from discussions of related topics. The views of most people may be elicited in at least two ways. The first is through their explicit views on related topics. For example, empirical research on the opinions of patients of the value of informed consent suggests that people do value their autonomy over matters of health.<sup>4</sup> The second source is through thought experiments. For example, it is common to suggest that the intuitive abhorrence felt by most people toward the social order described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which people are rendered content but non-autonomous by drugs, is suggestive of the intrinsic value placed on autonomy.<sup>5</sup> From such sources it is possible to set out the beliefs and puzzles. In both cases they can be divided into those to do with the nature of autonomy, and those to do with its value.

Beginning, then, with the nature of autonomy, the term "autonomy" suggests self-rule and sovereignty over action. This means more than being unconstrained, or at liberty. Thus autonomy involves more than just being free.<sup>6</sup> A young child, a psychotic adult, and an animal may all be unconstrained without being autonomous. Typically, it is rational agents who are said to be autonomous.<sup>7</sup> However, rational agents are not autonomous where they act upon desires implanted in them involuntarily through, for example, hypnosis or brainwashing. Such desires have been termed "alien desires."<sup>8</sup> However, the majority of adult human beings are autonomous and, most of the time, act autonomously.<sup>9</sup>

Autonomy has two dimensions.<sup>10</sup> It applies to both actions and agents. It is probable that an action is autonomous only when performed by an autonomous agent but it is not always the case that an act performed by such an agent is autonomous. For example, if an autonomous agent is coerced, or is ignorant of significant features of her act, then she may not act autonomously. Typically, the sorts of criteria offered for an autonomous act are that the agent is autonomous, that the agent is sufficiently informed and that the agent acts voluntarily.<sup>11</sup>

One final set of beliefs concerns the connection of autonomy with moral responsibility.<sup>12</sup> It seems probable that it is a necessary condition for holding someone morally responsible for an action that he be an autonomous agent. Where an autonomous agent acts autonomously it is probable also that this will be a sufficient condition for holding him morally responsible. There is a grey zone of negligent actions for which agents are held responsible but which do not seem autonomous.

It seems that autonomy is held to be of value in two ways. In the first place, it is important that autonomy develops in human agents. Inasmuch as autonomy is linked to rationality, the development of the two qualities seems intertwined. When autonomy does not develop or when it is lost, due to illness, accident or disability, it is seen as a tragedy. It is also important that autonomy is respected. It is seen as outrageous if autonomous agents are not permitted to make both important and trivial decisions about their lives. This is so even if an individual makes bad decisions.<sup>13</sup>

The puzzles concerning autonomy can be similarly divided into puzzles to do with the nature of autonomy and puzzles to do with the value of autonomy. On the nature of autonomy, an account of autonomy needs

to indicate criteria of autonomous agency and action. For example, it should allow us to determine whether we take the self-destructive action of a spurned young person to be autonomous.<sup>14</sup> The account should also allow us to determine how autonomy is related to moral responsibility. Generally we would hold that autonomy of agency and action is necessary in order to hold someone morally responsible for what she does. However, the relationship is not straightforward. We sometimes hold people morally responsible for acts that do not seem autonomous, as when a driver unknowingly breaks a local by-law.

On the value of autonomy, the key problem is that while it is widely accepted that the development and exercise of autonomy is of great value, it is not the only thing of value. There will be occasions when, in particular, the exercise of autonomy may clash with another value. A simple example of such a clash occurs when governments legislate against riding motorcycles without crash helmets. A good account of autonomy needs to allow us to determine where autonomy sits in the array of values.

### **The Nature of Autonomy**

Autonomy is linked to moral responsibility. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that praise and blame attach only to voluntary action and feelings.<sup>15</sup> An act is voluntary only if two conditions are met. The first is that the origin of the act is in the agent. This means that the act occurs because of the agent's desires and perceptions or beliefs. The second condition is that the agent has sufficient relevant knowledge concerning the act. This means there are no particulars concerning the act that the agent should know but does not. 'Friendly fire' in war is, sometimes, an example of involuntary action.

However, according to Aristotle, voluntariness is a necessary, but not sufficient, criterion for moral responsibility. Animals and children are capable of voluntary action but are not morally responsible.<sup>16</sup> The difference between the non-culpable voluntary action of animals and the culpable voluntary action of human adults lies in the different types of desire from which such action arises.

All animals, including human beings, are self-movers, capable of initiating movement without first being acted upon. What motivates them to move is the presence of a desire and some kind of belief or perception that the object of desire or avoidance can be obtained or avoided through action. From these two factors the animal will move unless there are any countervailing forces.

Animals are capable only of non-rational desire. The main type is appetite. This is a desire for something as pleasant. Reason is not involved in the process whereby appetite leads to action. For example, an animal that is thirsty and sees drink will immediately drink. This is the typical pattern of all non-human voluntary action. Animals are teleologically organised such that what they desire is, for the most part, what is good for them and their species.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in pursuing pleasures animals also pursue their good, but they do not do this consciously. As such, although they act voluntarily, they cannot but desire and, therefore, act as they do. By contrast, human beings pursue their good consciously. They have rational desire. A rational desire is a desire for something as good, worthwhile or of value. An individual's complete set of rational desires will constitute his view of goodness.

In Aristotle's view of human action someone weighs up the situation and then forms an intention. If nothing prevents the agent, at that point he



will act on his intention. One thing that might prevent the agent is non-rational desire. As animals, human beings are capable of non-rational desire, and this may conflict with rational desire. For example, a person may have an appetite to eat but a rational desire to lose weight. The phenomenon of weakness of will occurs when someone acts on his appetite rather than his intention.

An individual's view of goodness will contain things he thinks are instrumentally valuable, such as the acquisition of wealth, as well as things that are intrinsically valuable, such as having pleasant experiences. The key point is that the view of goodness is an agent's own, developed through a reasoning process. Hence, rational desire is a product of an agent's judgment, not something given by nature. By virtue of this reasoning, an agent with rational desire has control over what he desires to do, as well as what he does. This is the crucial difference between animals and human beings. It is the basis for our attribution of culpability for voluntary action. As such, it is the basis also of an Aristotelian account of autonomy.

Animals have non-rational desires and can, when unconstrained, act as they desire, but they have no control over what they desire. Human beings, on the other hand, have a view of goodness. This is the product of upbringing and ratiocinative processes. As such, they have some control over what they desire. Because reason plays this role in the formation of our view of goodness, people can be held responsible not only for what they do but also for what they desire. When we hold someone morally responsible for a voluntary action it is primarily because we hold him responsible for his rational desire, his view of goodness, as well as his action. On the Aristotelian account of autonomy, this control over desire as

well as action, which seems unique to humans, is what makes an agent autonomous, a self-ruler.

In many cases, as with a weak-willed agent, this self-rule is imperfect, but it is present nonetheless. Furthermore, autonomous agents possess the state capacity for full rational control over desires, even though this is only actualised in a virtuous agent. The degree of rational control that an agent actually possesses will be constitutive of his moral character. This leaves untouched the problem of free will and determinism. The account enables us to show how the presence of rational desire in human beings renders them autonomous and morally responsible. It does not enable us to show whether or not someone's reason is determined.

Aristotle describes four broad character types within which there are a number of variations. A virtuous agent has the right view of goodness and has no non-rational desires. She only desires what it is right to desire, what she would rationally endorse. A self-controlled agent has the right view of goodness but some non-rational desire that can conflict with it. However, he does not act upon these non-rational desires. A weak-willed agent has the same structure of desires as a self-controlled agent. However, she does act upon her non-rational desires. Finally, a vicious agent has the wrong view of goodness. He has the wrong rational desires and acts upon them. Aristotle believes most people to be somewhere between self-controlled and weak-willed.<sup>19</sup>

When an agent with moral character acts voluntarily, he expresses his character and can be held morally responsible for what he does. For this reason, we can say that the quality in virtue of which someone is autonomous is the quality in virtue of which he possesses moral character.

Hence, an autonomous agent must possess moral character and someone who possesses moral character must be an autonomous agent.

Two concerns arise in relation to this Aristotelian account of autonomy. One concern relates to action that originates in the non-rational desires of some autonomous agents, in particular, weak-willed agents. As we do not hold animals and young children morally responsible for actions that have their origin in non-rational desire, it would seem that this should be so also for similar actions by autonomous agents. However, this is out of line with common beliefs about weakness of will and with Aristotle's explicit doctrine on the subject. In response, an Aristotelian could say that a virtuous agent shows us that it is possible for all autonomous agents to gain rational control over their non-rational desires. Similarly, the self-controlled agent shows that, even in the presence of non-rational desire, an agent can be persuaded by reason. Agents who do not gain control, or are not persuaded by reason, have, therefore, suffered a failure of reasoning that means they can be held morally responsible for the action that occurs as a consequence of the failure.

The other concern is that it seems reasonable to doubt the proposition that all agents are responsible for their view of goodness. For example, someone who has suffered a particularly brutal upbringing might be thought incapable of being other than vicious. In response, Aristotle does seem to acknowledge the possibility of upbringing ameliorating moral responsibility in two ways. Someone may develop a bestial character due to a particularly brutal upbringing. Aristotle's thought must be that upbringing in an environment where the true human good is universally eschewed will lead to bestial character. Here the agent's badness "lies not in the corruption of the superior element ... but in its absence."<sup>20</sup> An agent,

no matter how intelligent, brought up in such an environment could never be virtuous and hence cannot be blamed for his bestial character. Another way in which upbringing may obviate moral responsibility is where it creates pockets of non-rational desire which are untouched by the rational processes of agents. These are states of a bestial nature that arise due to disease, madness or habit, such as plucking the hair, biting nails or eating coal. On Aristotle's account, someone with moral character may possess pockets of unnatural desire that give rise to such behavior. The thought seems to be that these unnatural desires are untouched and untouchable by ratiocinative processes, unlike the desires associated with vice or weakness of will. As the badness does not originate in the agent, he cannot be held responsible for the action. In a similar way, agents cannot be held responsible for actions that result from alien desires. A virtuous agent who develops Alzheimer's disease cannot be held responsible for his loss of the right vision of goodness or for his actions.

On Aristotle's view, then, an autonomous agent has moral character. Moral character is shown by the agent possessing a view of goodness developed through his own ratiocination. The type of moral character is a function of the degree of rational control the agent has over his feelings and actions. An autonomous action arises from the moral character of an autonomous agent. Hence, an act that arises from alien or bestial desire is not autonomous, even though it is voluntary.

This account of the nature of autonomy allows us to explain the various beliefs and to resolve the puzzles. It allows us to explain how autonomy is more than the capacity to act in an unconstrained way since it requires also the capacity for rational desire and intention. It also allows us to explain why most adults are autonomous since most of us have this

capacity even though we do not fully develop it. Most of us are not virtuous and practically wise. It allows us to explain the two dimensions of autonomy since agents are autonomous if they have the relevant capacity and actions are autonomous when agents exercise this capacity. It also allows us to explain the link between autonomy and moral agency since people are moral agents insofar as they have the capacity for rational desire, and rational desire is the core of autonomy.

There remains the puzzle regarding negligence. The key to an explanation lies in Aristotle's distinction between acting in ignorance and acting through ignorance. Someone acts in ignorance if she does not know important particulars of the situation. Someone acts through ignorance if she does not care to know important particulars of the situation. Essentially, a negligent act results from a failure to pay proper attention. Such a failure is a product of moral character. It is acting through ignorance rather than in it.

### **3. The value of autonomy**

A satisfactory account of autonomy must allow us to say why autonomy matters and why we should respect autonomy. It should also allow us to say how much it matters and indicate how we should respond when autonomy clashes with other values. From an Aristotelian perspective it is necessary to return to basic issues, in particular, the way in which an Aristotelian virtue ethics differs from other approaches such as Kantianism. Aristotelian virtue ethics has gradually re-entered the mainstream, partly through the work of G.E.M. Anscombe. One of Anscombe's points is that the modern sense of "right" as in "morally right" does not occur in Aristotle.<sup>21</sup> Aristotle does not have a notion of "moral" considerations or

reasons to act distinct from other areas. Aristotelian ethics is naturalistic. Anscombe invokes Aristotle in opposing the notion that there is a naturalist fallacy in ethics. For Aristotle, the reasons we have to act in whatever way, for example, to be just to someone, to drink a glass of wine or to get married, all depend ultimately on the kind of creature we are. Both Philippa Foot and Alasdair MacIntyre have developed explicitly naturalist accounts of virtue and ethics that draw upon Aristotle's naturalism and upon his essentialist biology.<sup>22</sup>

We must bear in mind this background of naturalism and essentialism when developing an Aristotelian account of the value of autonomy. Onora O'Neill's view is that the concept of individual autonomy is unable to bear the moral weight brought to it. For example, we cannot employ it to show why poorly thought through decisions are as morally valuable as fully rational decisions. An Aristotelian account does not need to allow us to do this as it does not provide us with a conception of goods having moral weight over and above their value to us *qua* rational, social animals.

Aristotle draws a connection between the terms "good" and "function" when developing his understanding of the good life for human beings.<sup>23</sup> He asks what makes anything good. For people with functions the answer is fairly straightforward. A good plumber or musician is a person who fulfils the function of a plumber or musician well. In doing this he exemplifies certain qualities, such as dexterity and attention to detail. Aristotle terms such qualities, virtues. If people had functions then a good life would be a life in which they functioned well. On the face of it this seems implausible. However, Aristotle argues that all natural kinds have a function, which is to realise their essential potentials or properties. An acorn is capable of

undergoing many changes. It can become food or an ornament. However, we understand what an acorn is only in terms of particular changes it may undergo in developing into an oak tree. These changes are its essential potentials or properties. The function of an acorn is to realise its essential property.

The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to people. Our function is to realise our essential property. By examining what makes human beings differ from other natural kinds, Aristotle argues that our essence lies in the fact that we are rational animals. Our function is to live the life of a fully rational animal. It follows that human virtues will either enable or instantiate such a life. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle analyzes a number of virtues. He says there are two main categories. These are intellectual virtues which enable us to reason well and moral virtues which enable us to desire well. He shows that the qualities we have come to believe to be human virtues enable us to function well as rational animals. Happiness will be more likely for someone with virtuous character than someone without a virtuous character. Such a person is also more likely to realise what is best in life and to achieve it than someone lacking in human virtues.

If happiness is the highest good, constituted primarily in living a life of virtue, it is possible to discern the place of autonomy in a happy life: happiness requires both autonomy of agency and action. An agent must be autonomous if she is to live a happy life. This follows from the fact that virtue is a type of moral character. Possession of moral character defines an autonomous agent. If someone were not autonomous she could not possess virtue. Autonomy is therefore necessary for happiness. As well as this, in order for someone to live a happy life, she must exercise virtue

through her actions. The actions must be voluntary and autonomous. Actions that are forced or performed through ignorance of particulars are not exercises of virtue. A life predominantly made up of such involuntary acts could not be happy. Similarly, acts that are based upon alien desires will not contribute to a happy life because while such acts are voluntary, they are not autonomous. Thus, happiness requires autonomy of agency and of action. Such autonomy is not sufficient for happiness. Vicious agents possess both but do not live a happy life. We may ask why we should value the autonomy of non-virtuous agents. Perhaps we should override the autonomy of, say, weak-willed and vicious agents whose autonomous actions cannot contribute to a happy life.

However, autonomy of agency and action is of value to non-virtuous agents because it is necessary in order for them to develop virtue.<sup>24</sup> Virtue is not an innate quality, it is a quality that may develop in someone, but it is up to the person whether it does or does not do so. It arises by the person doing the sort of things that a virtuous person does and thereby becoming habituated to virtue. This habituation to virtue is not simply the forced or unknowing repetition of particular acts, for two reasons. Virtue involves forming the right intention as well as performing the right action. Someone who learns habitually to tell the truth but without the right intention will not develop virtue. In addition, there is no single action, or set of actions, whose repetition could possibly habituate a person to virtue. Virtue is manifested in many ways. A virtuous agent will act rightly in completely novel situations. What will be common to all his actions will be that they are done because they are morally right, reflecting the agent's right intention and view of goodness. It follows that in order to become virtuous a person must be habituated to choosing to do things because



they are morally right. Moral rightness must become part of one's intention.

Autonomy is central to this process. An agent who is forced to go through the motions of virtuous action will never develop virtue. Similarly, an agent who is implanted with alien desire in order to act as a virtuous agent does will simply be left with a pocket of desire that is untouched by the agent's own ratiocination and which will have no effect on the rest of his view of goodness. An agent must exercise autonomy in order to become virtuous.

Overall, this gives us three ways in which autonomy is a necessary component of happiness. The first is that in order to be happy an agent must be an autonomous agent, that is, one with moral character. The second is that a virtuous autonomous agent must, for the most part, act autonomously in order to be happy. The third is that autonomy is central to developing the virtuous moral character that enables one to be happy. However, it is possible, indeed common, for autonomous agents to fail to be virtuous. Therefore, autonomy is a necessary, but not sufficient component of happiness.

The Aristotelian account enables us to show that we have good reason to respect autonomy. A virtuous agent could not lead a good or happy life if he did not have the quality of autonomy or if a significant proportion of his life were made up of non-autonomous action. Neither, under such conditions, could non-virtuous agents ever develop virtue and, thereby, become happy. However, it is clear that the nature of the contribution of autonomy to happiness will vary with the moral character of the agent. If an agent is virtuous, then the contribution is direct. If the agent is non-virtuous, then the contribution is indirect; his autonomous action may

contribute to eventual changes in moral character that will enable him to become happy.

This difference will be marked, for an Aristotelian, by different types of respect for autonomy. Acts that reflect virtuous moral character make a direct contribution to happiness. Respect for autonomy in such cases will be shown by an attitude of respect in the sense of admiration. This will be a hands-off respect in which others will, generally, have little to do other than desire to emulate and, occasionally, remove impediments to action. By contrast, self-controlled and weak-willed agents experience a conflict between their rational and non-rational desires. With both types of character there is still a good *prima facie* reason for respecting autonomy, that such people must be permitted to act autonomously if they are to develop their character. However, the way in which respect for autonomy is manifest in such cases will be different from the way it is manifest with virtue. Both self-controlled and weak-willed agents are, in a sense, wavering. A self-controlled person is in danger of giving in to non-rational desire. A weak-willed person might be persuaded to follow his rational desire. In such circumstances, we should seek to support the rational desire of the person. More colloquially, we should try to get the person to see reason. For example, we might try to dissuade someone struggling to control his alcohol intake from meeting at a bar.

The contribution to happiness of acts reflecting vice is the least direct of the four main character types. Nonetheless, vicious agents are likely to be discontent in various ways. Essentially, a vicious agent rationally endorses his non-rational desires, making them his rational desires. There is no reason to expect the non-rational desires to form a unified view of goodness. A vicious agent may have an appetite to eat to excess, be

excessively promiscuous, and drink too much. He may also want to do this over a full life. All such desires may lead him in different directions, and the satisfaction of one of them may sabotage the satisfaction of another. For example, the obesity and illness caused by intemperate eating and drinking may sabotage his plans to live long. Thus, even a vicious agent may come to reflect on his life and change. Again, therefore, the main role of others would seem to be to respect the autonomy of a vicious agent but also to try to get the person to see reason. Thus there is always a strong *prima facie* case for respecting autonomy. However, the nature of the respect will vary depending upon the character type manifested by the particular autonomous action.

Autonomy is not only of instrumental value in happiness. For Aristotle, happiness is largely comprised of on an active life of virtue for which autonomy is necessary. To that extent it is intrinsically valuable. Indeed, autonomous action is of instrumental value even where an action is not good or right action. However, this is not to side with liberals for whom autonomy is of supreme value such that paternalism is always objectionable. On an Aristotelian account, it is sometimes permissible to stop people when they are making bad judgments. Some choices may be so destructive that they remove the autonomy of an individual and hence the ability to develop his moral character.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

1. See Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-172; see also Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
2. See Onora O'Neill, *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001); "Autonomy: The Emperor's New Clothes," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 77* (2003); "Some Limits of Informed Consent" *Journal of Medical Ethics* 29 (2003).
3. Aristotle, *Topics Books I and VIII*, trans. Robin Smith (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 1.
4. See Su Mason and Peter Allmark, "Obtaining Informed Consent to Neonatal Randomised Controlled Trials: Interviews with Parents and Clinicians in the Euricon Study," *Lancet* 356 (2000).
5. Heta Hayry, *The Limits of Medical Paternalism* (London: Routledge, 1991) pp. 47-48.
6. Robert Young, "Autonomy and the 'inner self,'" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (1980):, p. 35.
7. Richard Lindley, *Autonomy* (London: Macmillan, 1986) p.14.
8. See Robert Noggle, "Autonomy, Value and Conditioned Desire," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995).
9. Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law. Volume 3: Harm to Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.28.
10. Lindley, op cit., p.6.
11. 19. See T. May, "The Concept of Autonomy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (1994).

12. See Richard Arneson, "Mill Versus Paternalism." *Ethics* 90 (1980).
13. Feinberg, *op cit.*, p. 27.
14. A.C. Inwald and Ian Hill-Smith, "Competency, Consent and the Duty of Care," *British Medical Journal* 317 (1998), p.809.
15. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 39-40.
16. *Ibid.*, p.130.
17. Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) pp. 332-333.
18. Aristotle, *op cit.*, p. 130.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 131.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
21. See G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* XXXIII (124) (1958).
22. Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Alasdair Macintyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need The Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).
23. See Jennifer Whiting, "Aristotle's function argument: a defense," *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1988).
24. Cf. Myles Burnyeat, "Aristotle on learning to be good," in Amelie O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (London: University of California Press, 1980).
25. The author acknowledges the extensive and helpful comments of the referee for and the Editor-in-Chief of this journal.