MENTAL AGENCY AND ATTRIBUTIONIST (OR "REAL SELF") ACCOUNTS OF

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

A Thesis

by

MARGARET IRENE SCHMITT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2011

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,   Hugh McCann
Committee Members,   Benjamin McMyler
                        Eddie Harmon-Jones
Head of Department,   Daniel Conway

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ABSTRACT

Mental Agency and Attributionist (or "Real Self") Accounts of Moral Responsibility.

(May 2011)

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Recently a number of philosophers have begun to promote what are broadly referred to as *attributionist* or *real self* views of moral responsibility. According these views a person is responsible for a thing just in case it is indicative or expressive of her judgments, values, or "world-directed" attitudes. These philosophers have focused a great deal of attention on dissolving the apparent tension between our commonsense intuitions concerning the connection between control and responsibility, on the one hand, and our lack of voluntary control over our values, beliefs and attitudes on the other. In attempting to relieve this tension, many of them have introduced various forms of *non*-voluntary control or agency we are said to exercise with respect to things such as our values, beliefs and attitudes. I argue that these supposed forms of *non*-voluntary agency are untenable because they typically rest on a failure to adequately distinguish between two ways in which we *make up our minds*; in short, they rest on a failure to adequately distinguish theoretical from practical reasoning. Once certain fundamental differences between theoretical and practical reasoning are brought back to the fore of the discussion, it becomes much harder to sustain some sort of unique species of agency that can be said to apply to beliefs and certain other world-directed attitudes. Without such forms of non-voluntary agency,

however, proponents of attributionists accounts of moral responsibility seem to face a dilemma; they must either: sneak volition in through the backdoor or commit to holding people responsible for things with respect to which they are passive.

The thesis falls into four main sections. In the first section, I introduce the problem by describing an ongoing debate between defenders of *attributionist* accounts of moral responsibility and defenders of what have been termed *volitionist* accounts of moral responsibility. In the second section, I explicate Pamela Hieronymi's construal of the form of non-voluntary agency she calls "evaluative control." In section three, I critique Hieronymi's account of evaluative control by pointing to two predominant points of divergence between theoretical and practical reasoning. In the fourth section, I examine the upshots of the absence of non-voluntary for attributionist accounts of moral responsibility; I do so by examining each horn of the dilemma mentioned above.

I dedicate this to my parents.

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And most of all, I would like to thank my parents for their continual love, support and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION:

TWO VIEWS OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Recently there has been a great deal of debate between proponents of what many philosophers have come to regard as two predominant (and contrasting) views of moral responsibility,[1] where the crux of the debate concerns the necessary conditions for moral responsibility. According to proponents of the first—often labeled *volitionist*—view, an agent is responsible for a thing just in case she has directly or indirectly chosen that thing.[2] In other words, proponents of this view maintain that choice, decision, or voluntary control is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. According to proponents of the second— often labeled *attributionist* or *real self*[3]—view, an agent is responsible for a thing just in case it is "indicative or expressive of her judgments, values, or normative commitments."[4] In other words, proponents of this view maintain that reflection of one's underlying character (or 'real self') is a necessary condition for moral responsibility.

This thesis follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

[1] For instance, see: Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility," *Philosophical Topics*: 24 (1996): 227-247; Neil Levy, "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworthy," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 1 (2005): 1-15; and Angela Smith, "Control, Responsibility, and Moral Assessment," *Philosophical Studies* 138 (2008): 367-392. Watson argues that the two accounts are mutually irreducible, while Levy and Smith argue on behalf of volitional and attributional accounts, respectively.

[2] The 'directly'/'indirectly' distinction is meant to account for the possibility that the responsibility for the thing in question might not rest on a choice for *that* thing but rather on a choice for some other thing which led to or brought about the thing (or state of affairs) in question. The main concern is that there was some choice in the etiology of the thing in question.

[3] Susan Wolf coined the 'Real Self' label in her book, *Freedom Within Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[4] Angela Smith, "Control, Responsibility, and Moral Assessment," 367.

This latter view can be seen as widening the scope of things for which we are responsible; for, while proponents of this view generally agree that we are responsible for things we voluntarily choose, they believe we are also responsible for things such as beliefs and certain other attitudes that, many would say, are not under our direct voluntary control.[5] Proponents of this view have focused a great deal of attention on dissolving the apparent tension between our commonsense intuitions concerning the connection between control and responsibility, on the one hand, and our lack of voluntary control over our values, beliefs and attitudes on the other. One of the main problems facing their account has to do with finding a way to extend the scope of moral responsibility beyond those things over which we possess voluntary control without extending it so far as to include things with respect to which we are passive. For example, while proponents of attributionist accounts do want to say we are responsible for a wide range of beliefs and other attitudes, they do not want to say we are morally responsible for mental states that have been implanted in us by something like an evil demon.[6] In other words, proponents of attributionist accounts want to retain *some* control condition for moral responsibility; they just do not want that condition to represent a sort of *voluntary* control. Thus, in order for their accounts to be successful, proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility must do two things: (i) develop an account of a unique species of control that can be clearly differentiated from *voluntary* control, and (ii) show that this form of control applies to the

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[5] Robert Adams provides one of the most frequently cited defenses of such a position in his article, "Involuntary Sins," *The Philosophical Review* XCIV (1985): 3-31.

[6] Smith discusses these sorts of cases in "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," 261-262.

class of things for which we are morally responsible (whatever this class happens to include).

This is just what proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility have attempted to do. Many of them have introduced various forms of *non*-voluntary control or agency we are said to exercise with respect to things such as our values, beliefs and attitudes. For example, Pamela Hieronymi endorses a particular form of, what she calls, "evaluative control," which "does not sport the usual features" of agency but, she urges, "deserves to be thought of as a form of agency" nonetheless.[7] Likewise, Angela Smith writes, "the kind of activity implied by our moral practices is not the activity of choice but the *activity* of evaluative judgment" (emphasis added).[8] Ultimately, these and similar proposed forms of agency come to represent some sort of middle ground between voluntary activity and passivity, conveniently supporting a wide range of our pre-theoretical intuitions concerning both the connection between control and responsibility *and* the fundamentality of our values, beliefs and attitudes in our existence as moral beings.

In this paper, I argue that this middle ground is untenable because it rests on a failure to adequately distinguish between two ways in which we *make up our minds* and thereby come to form attitudes. In short, I think proponents of *non*-voluntary agency mistakenly equate the process involved in theoretical reasoning with the process involved in practical reasoning. Doing so has, I think, brought about a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the active/passive distinction pertaining to mental happenings, which has in

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[7] "Two Kinds of Agency," in *Mental Actions,* eds. Lucy O'Brien and Matthew Soteriou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 161.
[8] "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," *Ethics* 115 (2005): 236-271. Pg. 237.

turn brought about an unnecessary muddling of the issues involved in debates on moral responsibility. Once certain fundamental differences between theoretical and practical reasoning are brought back to the fore of the discussion, it becomes much harder to sustain a unique species of agency that can be said to apply to beliefs and certain other world-directed attitudes. In the last section of the paper, I argue that the absence of such a form of agency ultimately brings proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility to a dilemma: they must either sneak volition in through the back door or commit to holding people responsible for things with respect to which they are passive.

The rest of the thesis falls into three main sections. In the first section, I explicate Pamela Hieronymi's construal of the form of *non*-voluntary agency she calls "evaluative control." I choose to focus on Hieronymi's evaluative control because it represents one of the most well-elaborated accounts of *non*-voluntary agency in the literature and also because the problems facing Hieronymi's account of evaluative control are indicative of the problems facing accounts of *non*-voluntary agency quite generally. In the second section, I criticize the close parallel Hieronymi draws between theoretical and practical reasoning. I suggest that there are in fact two points of divergence between these forms of reasoning within Hieronymi's framework of evaluative control. After explaining these points of divergence, I argue that, upon closer examination, there remains little motivation for the supposed species of non-voluntary control Hieronymi defends. In the third and final section, I suggest that, if my arguments from the second section stand, proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility face the dilemma mentioned above.

2. HIERONYMI ON EVALUATIVE CONTROL AND MENTAL AGENCY

In a series of recent articles,[9] Pamela Hieronymi has taken on the project of accounting for the particular form of agency we exercise with respect to a wide range of our own attitudes as well as the unique sort of responsibility this form of agency yields for us, as authors of those attitudes. This project falls much in line with the one taken on by Richard Moran in his influential monograph, *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge.*[10] Moran and Hieronymi are primarily interested in accounting for the class of psychological states referred to as *judgment-sensitive* attitudes,[11] rather than occurrent psychological states, such as sensations or passing thoughts; and they understand judgment-sensitive attitudes as: *attitudes which embody a person's answers to certain world-directed questions.* For instance, they say that a person's belief that *p* is just her answer to the question of whether *p*; a person's fear of *p* is just her answer the question of whether *p* is threatening in some way; a person's desire for *p* is just her answer to the question of whether *p* is worthy of being pursued; a person's intention to *ϕ* is just her answer to the question of whether to *ϕ*; etc.[12] Hieronymi

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[9] The articles include: "The Wrong Kind of Reason," *The Journal of Philosophy*, CII (2005): 437-457. "Controlling Attitudes," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006): 45-74; "Responsibility for Believing;" and "Two Kinds of Agency."

[10] Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

[11] Hieronymi refers to these attitudes as 'commitment-constituted' attitudes. However, I will call them 'judgment-sensitive' attitudes in this paper so as to remain more consistent with much of literature on attributionist accounts of moral responsibility.

[12] While one might object to this way of construing any number of these attitudes on the grounds that it's overly simplistic and fails to take into account important non-cognitive, emotive aspects that are likely to underlie the attitudes, I think we can overlook this objection for now. For as long as there remains *some* cognitive aspect to these attitudes, this way of construing them is actually quite helpful. Hence for this part of the paper, I am going to bracket the issues pertaining to the important role of emotions and, instead, focus solely on understanding the agency we exercise in establishing the cognitive component of

suggests that, in settling these sorts of world-directed questions, one becomes *committed* to one's answers and thereby open to certain sorts of criticisms regarding the attitudes which embody these answers.[13]

In order to ground this vulnerability to criticism, Hieronymi develops an account of two distinct forms of agency we are said to exercise with respect to this class of judgment-sensitive attitudes.[14] The first of these is based on the rather straightforward observation that, like ordinary objects, our attitudes react in predictable ways with our environment. So, Hieronymi says, insofar as we can think about our attitudes and understand our environment, we can control our attitudes in much the same way we control ordinary objects. We control ordinary objects by managing or affecting them according to our own purposes via intentional action; in other words, we control them by directing them towards a desired end. For instance, we control our living room furniture by acting upon it in ways designed to achieve a particular arrangement we desire.   Likewise, we can control our attitudes by taking actions designed to bring about a particular end.[15] For example, we can take drugs, undergo hypnosis, or solicit the help of friends we think could effectively persuade us to form certain beliefs or intentions we desire to have. Hieronymi calls this form of control *managerial* or *manipulative* control.

The second form of control arises from the fact that these attitudes embody a person's answers to world-directed questions, or, as Hieronymi says, that these attitudes

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these attitudes. I will address some of the issues related to emotional dispositions in the last section of the paper.

[13] Hieronymi provides the most extensive discussions of the nature of this commitment in "Responsibility for Believing," and "Two Kinds of Agency."

[14] Moran distinguishes between two very similar forms of agency in *Authority and Estrangement*, 113-120.

[15] "Two Kinds of Agency," 140.

embody a person's *take* on certain portions of the world. In order for a person to change

such attitudes, she must change her answers to the relevant questions or her take on the

relevant portions of the world. Hieronymi suggests that one way to change our take on the

world is to think about the world—about what is "true, important or worthwhile in it."[16]

She argues that when we change our take on things, or change our minds about some

aspect of the world, we *therein* change our judgment-sensitive attitudes. So, she concludes,

"We might say that we control these aspects of our minds because, as we change our mind,

our mind changes—as we form or revise our take on things, we form or revise our

attitudes."[17] Hieronymi calls this second form of control *evaluative* control. Both Moran and

Hieronymi argue that, unlike manipulative control, evaluative control is essentially first

personal. While we can exercise manipulative control over our own attitudes as well as the

attitudes of others (e.g. by drugging them, working to persuade them, etc.), evaluative

control is exercised exclusively from the first-person perspective. Thus, evaluative control

is said to ground our unique responsibility for our own attitudes.

2.1. Evaluative Control as *Non*-voluntary

As noted in the introduction, Hieronymi is careful to distinguish evaluative control

from voluntary control so as to establish the middle ground between voluntary activity and

passivity on which attributional accounts of moral responsibility rely. Her argument for this

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[16] "Responsibility for Believing," 370.
[17] "Two Kinds of Agency," 140.

relies on a distinction she draws between two sets of reasons that can count in favor of a judgment-sensitive attitude. The first are 'constitutive reasons,' which bear on the world-directed question the answer to which the attitude embodies. The second are 'extrinsic reasons,' which bear on the question of whether it would be "good, useful, desirable or important in some way" to have the attitude. For example, consider a belief I might have that I am a good candidate for a particular job for which I am interviewing. According to Hieronymi, the constitutive reasons for this belief bear on the question of whether I am in fact a good candidate for the job; whereas the extrinsic reasons for the belief bear on the question of whether having this belief would be somehow beneficial to me (e.g. by providing me with confidence for the interview).

Hieronymi says that an activity is voluntary "just in case (given the right background, and providing all goes well) you do it by deciding to do it, where you can decide to do it for *any* reason you take to show it worth doing" (emphasis added).[18] This definition of voluntariness allows Hieronymi to exclude judgment-sensitive attitudes from the class of things for which we possess voluntary control; for, Hieronymi argues that we cannot form these attitudes for *any* reason that counts in favor of them but rather only for constitutive reasons which bear on the world-directed questions the answers to which these attitudes embody. Ultimately, the distinction Hieronymi draws between extrinsic and constitutive reasons allows her to isolate a class of reasons that count in favor of judgment-sensitive attitudes but nevertheless cannot be used to form judgment-sensitive attitudes; these she calls 'extrinsic reasons'. By finding certain extrinsic reasons convincing, one would not form a first-order judgment-sensitive attitude (e.g. the belief that I am a good

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[18] "Responsibility for Believing," pg. 366.

candidate for the job) but rather a *second*-order attitude about the first-order attitude (e.g. the belief that it would be useful for me to believe that I am a good candidate for the job). In advancing this argument, Hieronymi appears to be on her way to establishing a unique species of *non*-voluntary control.

However, this definition of voluntariness ends up excluding intentions from the class of things over which we possess voluntary control as well. According to Hieronymi, an intention to ϕ is simply the embodiment of a person's answer to the question of whether to ϕ. Intentions are thus subject to the same constraint as other judgment-sensitive attitudes; for the same extrinsic/constitutive distinction applies to reasons that can count in favor of intending. Constitutive reasons for intending to ϕ are those that show the action ϕ worth doing, while extrinsic reasons for intending to ϕ are those that show the intention to -ϕ (a psychological state) good to have without showing the action ϕ worth doing. For example, I might get offered a small sum of money just to intend to jump from the top of the Empire State Building without actually having to jump. In this case, there would be extrinsic reasons that bear on the question of whether having the intention to jump is beneficial but do not bear on the question of whether to jump. Just as in the case of all other judgment-sensitive attitudes, one cannot intend to ϕ for *any* reason that counts in favor of intending but only for constitutive reasons that bear on the question of whether to ϕ. Thus, according to Hieronymi, we can no more intend at will than believe at will.

However, I believe this argument relies on an excessively narrow definition of voluntariness, which ultimately fails to capture the sense of voluntariness at issue in the debates on moral responsibility. For it seems that most people who are going to grant voluntary control at all are going to grant it with respect to our ability to form our own

intentions. I think the conception of voluntariness at issue in the debates on moral responsibility corresponds to a more general conception of voluntariness Hieronymi grants *is* at play within her realm of evaluative control.

2.2. Voluntariness at Issue in Debates on Moral Responsibility

To help clarify the more general conception of voluntariness I take to be at issue, I will briefly return to Hieronymi's discussion of intentions. According to Hieronymi, forming an intention to ϕ amounts to: *settling the question of whether to* ϕ. But, one could ask, what does this *settling the question* of whether to ϕ amount to? In several places Hieronymi suggests it amounts to nothing more then deciding to ϕ; in fact she uses *deciding to* ϕ and *settling the question of whether to* ϕ interchangeably throughout most of her writings. She also says in several places that we can decide to act for *any* reason we take to count in favor of the action (or no reason) at all.[19] In other words, we can decide to ϕ for any of the *constitutive* reasons which bear on the on the question of whether to ϕ. So, for instance, when considering whether to go to a movie tonight, I might acknowledge several reasons that count in favor of doing so. Going to the movie might provide a much-needed break from studying or allow me to reconnect with old friends who are planning to meet there. I might weigh these reasons against other reasons I have for staying home (e.g. needing to prepare for the final I have the next morning at 8am). Ultimately, I might conclude that, while the reasons in favor of staying home weigh more heavily, reconnecting with old

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[19]144-145.

friends is a sufficient reason for going to the movie; thus, I might take seeing old friends for my reason and therein decide to go to the movie.

It seems to me the fact that nothing requires that we decide to act for one set of reasons rather than another is enough to consider *deciding to act* something we do at will.[20] And, if intentions are something like the psychological byproducts, or termini, of (mental) acts of deciding which are themselves voluntary, then forming intentions (and thereby intending) is itself something we do at will. Hieronymi appears to agree with this; she writes, "There is, of course, a sense in which we *can* intend at will: we can decide to ϕ and therein intend to ϕ. We can intend to ϕ by evaluative control, in response to reasons for ϕ-ing."[21] She ultimately resists this conception of intending at will, however, and instead endorses the more stringent conception of intending at will, wherein to intend at will one must be able to intend for extrinsic reasons.

However, I find Hieronymi's basic distinction between extrinsic and constitutive reasons and her overall framework of evaluative control more helpful in coming to understand the purposive nature of many of these attitudes than in adjudicating the disputes surrounding moral responsibility. For proponents of volitional accounts of moral responsibility seem interested in *precisely* the sort of voluntariness we exercise in deciding to act for one set of reasons rather than another. Cases such as one in which an agent takes her future pleasure as sufficient reason for robbing the neighborhood bank, while fully acknowledging the reasons against doing so, represent common ground for proponents of

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[20] Hugh McCann provides an extensive and illuminating discussion of how *deciding for reasons* relates to the formation of intentions in chapter 8 of his book, *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will, and Freedom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[21] "Controlling Attitudes," 368.

attributionist and volitional accounts of moral responsibility. Thus Hieronymi's work is not done; if she stops here, everyone would simply be talking past one another. Proponents of attributionist accounts would maintain that forming intentions and other judgment-sensitive attitudes is not something we do at will while ultimately appealing to the form of voluntary control proponents of volitional accounts argue underlies moral responsibility.[22] In order to arrive at a conclusion regarding the status of our moral responsibility for our attitudes, we should examine what happens when we apply this more general conception of voluntariness to the larger class of judgment-sensitive attitudes.

Hieronymi is ready to concede that, if we use this more liberal conception of voluntariness, we could be said to believe at will just as we could be said to intend at will. In her article "Controlling Attitudes," she writes,

> There is, of course a sense, in which we *can* intend at will: we can decide to ϕ and therein intend to ϕ. We can intend to ϕ by evaluative control, in response to reasons for ϕ-ing. (In this sense we can also believe at will—we can believe by evaluative control, in response to reasons which bear on whether p.)[23]

However, I think Hieronymi draws this conclusion much too quickly. If we reflect on some of the differences between theoretical and practical reasoning, it becomes clear that, even on this more general conception of voluntariness, believing, unlike intending, is *not* something we do at will.

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[22] In "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworthy," Neil Levy argues that both T.M. Scanlon and Angela Smith frequently appeal to this sort of voluntary control in defending their attributional accounts of moral responsibility. I agree with him on this point.

[23] "Controlling Attitudes," 63.

3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL REASONING

As discussed above, Hieronymi has developed what she takes to be a unique species of *non*-voluntary agency we exercise in forming all of our judgment-sensitive attitudes; she calls this form of agency 'evaluative control'. However, all she tells us about this evaluative control is that it represents our capacity to settle various world-directed questions on the basis of constitutive reasons; and, all she tells us about these constitutive reasons is that they are those reasons that bear on these world-directed questions. As a result, her account of evaluative control ends up being quite cryptic. The aim of this section is to fill in the gaps left by Hieronymi and show how we in fact exercise this 'evaluative control' and thereby come to settle various world-directed questions on the basis of constitutive reasons. In doing so, I will focus on beliefs and intentions, as they represent paradigm embodiments of one's answer to theoretical and practical questions, respectively. Ultimately, I point to two predominant points of divergence between theoretical and practical reasoning *within* Hieronymi's framework of evaluative control. The first relates to the questions that are being answered; and the second relates to the way in which the constitutive reasons bear on these questions.

Recall, the basic framework is this: a belief that p is the embodiment of one's answer to the question whether p, which gets formed on the basis of constitutive reasons one takes to bear on the question whether p; and an intention to ϕ is the embodiment of one's answer to the question whether to ϕ, which gets formed on the basis of constitutive reasons one takes to bear on the question whether to ϕ.

3.1 Differences Between Theoretical and Practical *Questions*

As I see it, the root of Hieronymi's problem lies in her failure to acknowledge the crucial differences between the various questions being answered in forming judgment-sensitive attitudes. She acknowledges that the questions *are* different in the sense that a belief that *p* is an answer to the question whether *p*, a fear of *p* is an answer to the question whether *p* is threatening, an intention to ϕ is an answer to the question whether to ϕ, etc. However, beyond that, she spends the majority of her time drawing parallels between the questions being answered in forming judgment sensitive attitudes. Throughout most of her writings she refers these questions quite generally as "world-directed" questions. As a result, she suggests that these questions constrain our ability to form judgment-sensitive attitudes in the same way. She writes,

> Intending fails to be voluntary in just the same way believing, resenting and fearing fail to be voluntary. An intention, no less than a belief expresses a subject's take on its object—in his case on some possible object.[24]

The object in the case of intentions is said to be a *possible* object because it's something like the mental representation of some possible, future action. Hieronymi seems to think that such imagery adequately captures the relevant differences between the various questions being answered in forming judgment-sensitive attitudes; however, the fact that an intention represents one's take one some *possible* object as opposed to an actual object has profound implications for both the way in which we understand the question that's being answered in forming the attitude and how that sort of question *can* be answered.

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[24] Ibid., 368.

Hieronymi suggests that the only implication this has is to make intending *seem* more voluntary than believing, fearing, resenting, etc. [25] She writes,

> Intending can *seem* more voluntary not only because it is always easy to confuse an attitude with its object (in this case, voluntary action), but also because the question of whether to perform some action or bring about some state of affairs . . . is an extremely permissive one.[26]

Not only is this an understatement of the implications of having the object of an intention be a *possible* object as opposed to actual object, I think it represents a misconception of the nature of intentions. For it's not just that an intention is the embodiment of one's answer to a question that affords greater latitude than those involved in other judgment-sensitive attitudes; it's that an intention is the embodiment of one's answer to a question that is of an essentially different kind than those involved in other judgment-sensitive attitudes. In brief, the questions we answer in forming the majority of our judgment-sensitive attitudes have to do with our properly understanding some object (or state of affairs) in the world that gets imposed on us from without, whereas the questions we answer in forming intentions have to do with what sort of object (or states of affairs) we plan to create.[27]

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[25] T.M. Scanlon makes a similar suggestion in *What We Owe to Each Other*; see especially pg. 22.

[26] "Controlling Attitudes," 368 (emphasis added).

[27] In her most recent article—"The Will as Reason," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23 (2009): 201-220—Hieronymi acknowledges the important difference between these questions and describes it in much the same way I have here (see pg. 209). However, she fails to flesh out the ramifications of this difference in terms of its impact on our ability to settle the questions. This is precisely what I address in the last part of this paper.

3.2. How Constitutive Reasons Bear on Theoretical and Practical Questions

In order to fully understand the disparate natures of theoretical and practical questions, it will be helpful to examine how we answer them on the basis of constitutive reasons. While Hieronymi doesn't have much to say on this topic, she does make two points throughout her writings that seem pertinent. First, she frequently argues that the evaluative control exercised in answering these questions is *immediate* in a way that managerial or manipulative control is not. In exercising manipulative control, an agent takes steps to bring about a desired attitude; for example, she takes a pill or consults a hypnotist. Conversely, in exercising evaluative control, an agent settles a world-directed question and *therein* forms an attitude. For example, in settling the question whether *p*, a person becomes committed to the truth of *p* and *therein* believes that *p*. Secondly, Hieronymi often explains our *settling world-directed questions* in terms of our "finding reasons convincing." For example, in discussing the formation of beliefs, she writes, "If one finds convincing the reasons that one takes to bear on whether *p*, one will, *therein*, settle the question of whether *p*."[28] In other words, our finding reasons convincing seems to have an *immediate* impact on our settling the question, just like our settling the question has an *immediate* impact on the attitude that gets formed.[29] This seems rather uncontroversial.

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[28] "Responsibility for Believing," 369 (emphasis added).

[29] One might think I am being uncharitable to Hieronymi in emphasizing this second form of *immediacy*—that of finding reasons convincing and therein settling questions. I think this is a legitimate criticism with respect to some passages in Hieronymi's work; however, with respect to several other passages, I think my reading is quite accurate. There is actually a great deal of ambiguity surrounding Hieronymi's notion of what it means to 'find reasons convincing'. This results from the fact that she seems to use the phrase in two very different ways. In some passages she suggests the reasons do the work, in the sense that the

When a person comes to find (what she takes to be) a sufficient amount of evidence for *p* convincing, she typically becomes committed to the truth of *p* and therein believes that *p*. However, this becomes more problematic when we apply the same schema to intentions.

If an intention to ϕ is the embodiment of one's answer to the question of whether to ϕ, which gets formed on the basis of reasons in favor of ϕ-ing one finds convincing, then this would exclude the possibility of full-blown *akrasia*, wherein an agent decides to act against her all-things-considered best judgment (as in the cases of my deciding to go to the movies and an agent's deciding to rob the bank discussed above). For, if an intention to ϕ gets formed *immediately* upon settling the question whether to ϕ, and settling the question whether to ϕ occurs *immediately* upon finding reasons that bear on the question whether to ϕ convincing, there is no point at which the agent could form the intention to not-ϕ in full recognition of the reasons weighing in favor of ϕ-ing. However, there are two problems with this. Firstly, intentional, akaratic actions are generally considered paradigm instances of morally blameworthy behavior (insofar as one accepts the possibility of our being morally blameworthy agents). Hence, it seems that this is just the sort of phenomenon that should *not* get excluded in an attempt to account for the form of agency said to *yield* our moral responsibility. Secondly, this simply does not correspond to ordinary experience; we often (but, hopefully, not too often) decide to act and then proceed to act against our better judgment.

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reasons *convince* the agent. In other passages, however, she suggests the deliberative agent plays a more prominent role, in the sense that the agent *takes* something as her reason and therein deems it convincing. I address this ambiguity below.

In her most recent article, "The Will as Reason," Hieronymi suggests that the solution to the problem of akratic intentions lies in the fact that practical reasoning is not directed at the question of whether one ought to ϕ or whether one has most reason to ϕ, but rather (as suggested all along) at the question of whether to ϕ. This is meant to emphasize that practical reasoning is not a form of theoretical reasoning directed at a practical subject matter; practical reasoning is instead reasoning about whether to act. Hieronymi takes this to be sufficient to show that forming akratic intentions is possible; she writes,

> We certainly expect a person to be guided, in answering the question of whether to act, by the reasons she acknowledges, when reasoning about her reasons for action. But this expectation may not be met. It is quite possible (though no doubt irrational) to conclude that you have reason to ϕ without also deciding to ϕ, or to decide to ϕ while acknowledging that you have most reason not to ϕ. *This happens when the reasons one acknowledges, when reasoning theoretically, are not the reasons that one employs, when reasoning practically.*[30]

However, one has to wonder what it means for an agent to "employ" certain reasons when reasoning practically that differ from those she acknowledges when reasoning theoretically. Hieronymi does not expound on this claim much at all; however, in describing the practical and theoretical 'employments' of reason, she writes,

> . . . these two employments differ in very important ways, and these differences are not simply a matter of the content or subject matter about which one is reasoning. Practical reasoning is not simply theoretical reasoning about actions or reasons for it. Rather, the   two employments differ in what some would call 'form'.[31]

Interestingly, Hieronymi goes on to say this difference in form results from the fact that theoretical and practical reasoning are directed at "very different kinds of questions." Hieronymi is here referring to the sort of differences I described above; however, she never

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[30] "The Will as Reason," 207 (emphasis added).
[31] Ibid., 209.

goes on to discuss the ramifications of these differences. She tells us these differences are "very important," but she never tells us how these differences come to bear on her overall project.

I take the salient ramification to be this: in granting this ability to 'employ' certain reasons when reasoning practically that differ from those one acknowledges when reasoning theoretically, Hieronymi relies on the *capacity for choice* proponents of volitional accounts of moral responsibility argue must be exercised in order for an agent to be morally responsible for a thing. For Hieronymi suggests that, in order to bridge the gap from one's theoretical *judgment* as to what there is reason to do to one's *decision* of what to do, an agent must select (however implicitly or unconsciously) the reasons she will employ in practical reasoning; or in other words, the agent must select which reasons she will use to justify her action. If this is the case, however, then it seems not only *possible* for us to exercise some sort of volitional capacity in settling practical questions for ourselves but *necessary* for us to do so. In other words, it seems volition plays an *essential* role in settling practical questions and forming intentions.[32]

One might argue that this is an uncharitable characterization of Hieronymi; for one might think there is only a gap between finding reasons convincing and employing them when a person is irrational. In other words, one might think that, insofar as we are rational,

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[32] It should be noted that in "The Will as Reason," Hieronymi advances an argument against referring to a capacity for volition that is *separate* from our capacity for reasoning. Instead she prefers to speak of 'reason in its practical employment'. She has several reasons for preferring this, among which is her belief that agents are answerable for all of their activities in a particular way—namely, they are answerable to their *reasons* for those activities. I use the term 'volition' throughout this paper simply to refer to a capacity for free choice; I remain neutral on whether this capacity is situated in reason or some separate capacity for willing. So this should not be a point of concern for the reader.

we *do* intend immediately upon finding constitutive reasons (or reasons in favor of ϕ-ing) convincing. In many ways Hieronymi seems to imply this, for she often includes the "insofar as we are rational" clause in order to leave room for akratic intentions without excluding the immediacy discussed above.[33]

If this is what Hieronymi is implying, I find her account deeply problematic. For she seems to want there to be more ownership over the reasons one 'employs' when reasoning practically than would be accounted for if akratic intentions resulted from something like a breakdown in our rational capacities. The importance of this ownership is quite salient in the arguments she advances in her article, "The Will as Reason," especially her argument against certain accounts of weakness of will which relies on an analogy she draws between the weakness of will depicted in those accounts and inopportune muscle twitches. Ultimately, I think Hieronymi is pointing to something more of an active *taking* as one's reason; and I don't know how else to think of this except in terms of an ability to *endorse*, or *choose* one's reason. However, if there is a gap in cases of irrationality, wherein a person chooses other reasons to employ in practical reasoning then those she acknowledges when reasoning theoretically, then why should we think there is not a gap in cases of rationality, wherein a person chooses to employ in practical reasoning those reasons she acknowledges when reasoning theoretically? If you allow the gap in the first case but not the second, you ultimately give the person more ownership over her akratic intentions than her non-akratic intentions. In other words, you end up failing to give the agent the same amount of credit for her praiseworthy intentions that you give her for her blameworthy

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[33] I thank Professor Benjamin McMyler for bringing this potential objection to my attention.

intentions.[34] In order to avoid such an unsatisfactory asymmetry, we must be consistent one way or the other. Thus, if Hieronymi is going to solve the problem of akratic intentions by appealing to volition, or a power to choose one's reasons, then we should assume that an exercise of volition is omnipresent in the settling of practical questions and the forming of intentions.

But this might not be problematic for Hieronymi, since she was, after all, willing to grant that we exercise voluntary control in forming judgment-sensitive attitudes, according to the more liberal conception of voluntariness discussed above. Recall, this form of voluntary control is conceived as an ability to establish one's own attitude by settling a 'world directed' question on the basis of constitutive reasons one (actively) *takes* to bear on that question. As I see it, the real problem is that Hieronymi is so ready to concede that, if we accept this more liberal conception of voluntariness, we can be said to believe (or desire, or fear, etc.) at will just as we can be said to intend at will. In order to understand the problematic nature of this claim, we should start by examining what it means to believe at will on this account of voluntariness.

Hieronymi often speaks of judging in terms of its being the theoretical correlate of deciding and thus suggests that, according to this more liberal conception of voluntariness, believing at will amounts to judging that *p* on the basis of constitutive reasons one *takes* to bear on the question whether *p*. At one point, Hieronymi goes so far as to say, " . . . there is a ready sense in which we can believe by making a decision. In many cases, we can consider

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[34] I believe that a person is bound by her conscience and thus always obligated to act in accordance with her judgment of what *should* be done, even if that judgment is objectively wrong. This is why I correlate akratic intentions with blameworthy intentions and non-akratic intentions with praiseworthy intentions.

the evidence for or against p, come to a decision about whether p, and so believe p."[35] Because this is the same schema that applies to intentions, we can examine a case similar to the one of my deciding to go to the movies discussed above. Suppose that, instead of considering whether to go to the movies tonight, I am considering whether I am a good candidate for a job for which I am interviewing. In doing so, I might acknowledge several reasons for thinking I am a good candidate. For example, I might have more education than is required for the position or get along well with the president of the company. I might weigh these reasons against other reasons I have for thinking I am not a good candidate for the job (e.g. the fact that the job requires careful attention to detail while I am more of a "big picture" person). Ultimately, I might acknowledge that the reasons weigh in favor of my not being a good candidate for the job, yet, if judging really is the theoretical correlate of deciding, I might instead take the fact that I get along well with the boss as my reason and therein judge that I am a good candidate for the job. If we draw a parallel with Hieronymi's account of akratic *intentions*, akratic *beliefs* would be the result of a person's failure to "employ" the reasons in favor of not-p, which she acknowledges when reasoning about *her reasons for belief*, in the process of reasoning about *whether* p.

The problem with this account of believing at will is that the evidence in support of my being a good candidate for the job loses its motivational force upon my making the higher-order, or 'all things considered' judgment that the totality of available evidence appears to establish that I am *not* a good candidate for the job. For, in acknowledging that the totality of available evidence weighs in favor of not-p, one simultaneously becomes committed to the fact that the evidence in favor of p does *not* show p to be the case and thus

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[35] "Responsibility for Believing," 364.

is *not* suitable for supporting the judgment that *p*. In other words, the evidence in support of my being a good candidate for the job gets subsumed by the conflicting evidence and thus is *no longer suitable for serving as a reason at all.* In her book *Natural Reason*, Susan Hurley writes, "The less inclusive probabilistic evidence has no constitutive reason-giving force that could hold out in the face of recognition that it's subsumed by the best probabilistic evidence, which favor the opposite conclusion."[36] So, in the case discussed above, there is *nothing* I can take as a reason for judging that I am a good candidate for the job (and hence nothing which represents a constitutive reason for the belief that I am a good candidate for the job), while in full awareness of my higher order judgment that the evidence suggests I am not a good candidate for the job.

Kieran Setiya and David Owens have advanced similar arguments against the possibility of believing at will.[37] Both of their arguments hinge on the impossibility of forming a belief *freely and deliberately* while fully *conscious or aware* of the fact that the belief would be unjustified with respect to the available evidence. Setiya's argument admittedly rests on the following controversial premise:

> *It is* impossible *to believe that* p *or to be confident that* p *while believing that this degree of confidence or belief is not epistemically justified.*[38]

However, it is unclear whether this premise is ultimately necessary. In his article, "Epistemic Akrasia," Owens notes that the possibility of epistemic akrasia is usually taken to rest on the following two conditions:

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[36] *Natural Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 131-132.

[37] See: David Owens, "Epistemic Akrasia," *The Monist* 85 (2002):381-397; and Kieran Setiya, "Believing at Will," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXXII (2008): 36-52.

[38] Setiya speaks of this as the "epistemic constraint on belief;" it's first stated on pg. 43 of "Believing at Will."

Judgment Condition (JC): a person's first-order beliefs can diverge from her
higher-order judgments about what it would be
reasonable for her to believe

Control Condition (CC): these divergent first-order beliefs are freely and
deliberately formed

Like Setiya, many people argue *against* the possibility of epistemic akrasia on the grounds

that conditions JC and CC cannot be met. Contrary to this, Owens suggests that JC can be

(and often is) met but that epistemic akrasia is nevertheless impossible because CC cannot

be met.[39]

It does seem rather plausible that we might *find* ourselves with beliefs that we

consider unjustified or even irrational on reflection. For instance, I might find myself

believing that my husband is still alive despite reports that his plane went down over the

Atlantic or believing, as Scanlon suggests, that my friend is a loyal companion even though I

recognize he is in fact an "artful deceiver." Scanlon and others take such cases as evidence

for the possibility of epistemic akrasia; for instance, Scanlon writes,

> Belief is not merely a matter of judgment but of the connections, over time,
> between this judgment and dispositions to feel conviction, to recall as relevant, to
> employ as a premise in further reasoning, and so on. Insofar as akrasia involves the
> failure of these connections, it can occur in the case of belief as well as in that of
> intention and action.[40]

However, Owens argues that there remains an important impediment to epistemic akrasia,

one that lies in the control condition (CC) rather than the judgment condition (JC). Since

akratic behavior is usually taken as an exercise of deliberate agency as opposed to something

that simply befalls us, it's not enough that we can *find* ourselves with irrational beliefs like

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[39] Owens provides an extensive discussion of the control condition and the impossibility of epistemic reflective control in his book, *Reason without Freedom: The Problem of Epistemic Normativity* (New York: Rutlege, 2000).

[40] *What We Owe to Each Other*, 35.

we might *find* ourselves stumbling into a stranger as the subway we're riding makes an abrupt stop; rather, as agents, we must play a more prominent role in establishing the akratic attitude.

Something along these lines is more consistent with the view Hieronymi wants to endorse. As mentioned above, Hieronymi seems to think we play a more deliberate role in settling world-directed questions and forming beliefs and other attitudes. At the end of the article, "The Will as Reason," Hieronymi explicitly distances this aspect of her account of judgment-sensitive attitudes from that of Scanlon. Scanlon describes akratic attitudes as mental states that failed to be sensitive to our judgments about what there is most reason to do or believe; and in *What We Owe to Each Other* this ultimately gets spelled out in terms of a breakdown in our rational capacities. For instance, at one point Scanlon writes, "Akratic actions (and irrational thoughts) are cases in which a person's rational capacities have *malfunctioned*, not cases in which these capacities are overmastered . . ."[41] Hieronymi finds this unsatisfactory and writes in criticism,

> We will be able to accommodate our peculiar answerability for judgment-sensitive attitudes by understanding them, not merely as attitudes that *ought* to co-vary with our judgments about reasons for them, but as themselves embodying our answers to certain questions . . . where that answering is the sort of activity that might have been done for reasons. . .[42]

Hieronymi repeatedly captures the form of agency that underlies our responsibility for judgment-sensitive attitudes in terms of our ability to settle questions (and thereby form the attitudes) *however we see fit* on the basis of reasons *we take to bear* on those questions.[43]

However, this can be a bit deceiving. Sure, Hieronymi is correct to suggest that we

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[41] *What We Owe to Each Other*, 40 (emphasis added).
[42] "The Will as Reason," 215 (emphasis added).
[43] See, for example, "Responsibility for Believing," 370.

form beliefs on the basis of evidence we see as counting in favor of that belief; in other words, she is correct to suggest that we form beliefs on the basis of reasons we take to show the actual obtaining of the state-of-affairs that is the object of our belief. And, she is correct to suggest that we do this "however we see fit," in the sense that we form beliefs on the basis of how the evidence *appears to us*, or how we *see* the evidence. But this does not imply, in turn, that we can do something like settle these questions and thereby form beliefs however we *want*, or however we *desire*. To be sure, Hieronymi is rather clear that it does *not* imply this; however, I think she strategically employs the phrase "however we see fit" throughout her writings to indicate a more positive form of agency that does not actually exist in the case of beliefs.

David Owens argues that, in order for us *to* exercise the sort of deliberate agency Hieronymi describes in forming beliefs, two conditions must be met: (a) believing must be purposive and (b) believing must serve a variety of goals. However, like many others, Owens suggests that believing fails to meet condition (b). Ultimately, it is this failure to meet condition (b) that gives rise to the fundamental divergence between believing and intending. However, before I get to discussing condition (b), I would like to with a brief discussion of condition (a) and its upshots for Hieronymi's theory of evaluative control.

In his frequently cited essay, "On the Aim of Belief," J. David Velleman argues that believing meets the condition (a), because, when we believe, we aim to represent the world the way it is. Velleman writes, "Belief is the attitude of accepting a proposition with the *aim* of thereby accepting a truth . . ."[44] This is a claim that Hieronymi and most philosophers

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[44] In J. David Velleman. *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 252 (emphasis added).

accept. So, I will not worry about defending it here. Rather, I am more interested in what it has to do with Hieronymi's account of evaluative control.

As Owens points out, it is this purposive nature of beliefs that accounts for the fact that we cannot simply form a belief that, e.g., the moon is made of cheese upon being offered money to form such a belief (unless that money is taken as evidence for the truth of the belief that the moon is made of cheese). Likewise, it's the purposive nature of intentions that prevents us from forming them for *any* reason taken to count in their favor. For, just as the entire purpose of believing is to accept a truth, the entire purpose of intending is to settle on a plan of action and carry that plan through in action. So, the reason I can't form the intention to, e.g., jump over my house in order to win a bet is because, in order for me to jump over my house, a number of my general beliefs about the state of the world would have to be false. And it would be futile for me to settle on plans of action that, for all I know, I cannot carryout.

The reason we can't form intentions or beliefs for *any* reason taken to count in favor of intending or believing is that these psychological states serve a specific function in our lives. It is not due to any *limitation* in our agency; rather it is what allows for our being agents at all. Hieronymi often makes similar points; for example, in her article, "Responsibility for Believing" she writes,

> We cannot control our beliefs, intentions, or other commitment-constituted attitudes in the way we control our actions, not because of any shortcoming in our agency or limitation in our powers, but rather because each of these attitudes embodies our answer to some question other than whether that attitude is in some way good to have or adopt.[45]

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[45] 370.

So, Hieronymi is correct to suggest that believing is on par with intending, fearing, desiring, etc, at least with respect to the first condition mentioned above; for all judgment-sensitive attitudes are *purposive* mental states. It's because of the purposive nature of these attitudes that they cannot be formed for just *any* reason taken to count in their favor but rather only for *constitutive* reasons that bear on their corresponding "world-directed" questions. In other words, it's the purpose nature of intentions and other judgment-sensitive attitudes that gives rise to the extrinsic/constitutive reason distinction Hieronymi points to in developing her account of evaluative control.

However, while Hieronymi is correct to suggest that intending and believing both meet the *first* condition mentioned above, David Owens and Susan Hurley argue that it is the *second* condition that gives rise to the asymmetry between intending and believing. Owens and Hurley argue that beliefs, unlike intentions, do *not* serve a variety of goals in our lives. For example, even though we often act in the pursuit of various ends—e.g. sometimes we act for the sake of prudence, while at other times we act for the sake of convenience—we never believe in the pursuit of various ends. Rather we only form beliefs for the sake of representing reality, or accepting a truth.[46]

We can illustrate this point of asymmetry by returning to the previous examples of intending to go to the movie and believing that I am a good candidate for the job for which I am interviewing. In the case of intending to go to the movie, even if I judge that I ought not go to a movie tonight because I have a final exam in the morning for which I need to study and doing well on the exam is a superior good to that of seeing old friends, I can still

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[46] While this is sometimes disputed, it is certainly the predominant view. And it is certainly the view Hieronymi holds.

view seeing old friends as a good in itself. Thus, I can still consider the fact that I will get to see old friends as a legitimate *reason* for going to the movie tonight. Going to the movie might not be the *prudent* or even *moral* thing to do, but it might be the most *desirable* or *easiest* thing to do. Because our actions serve a variety of goals in our lives, I can legitimately decide to go to the movies *because*, or for the reason that, it's the more desirable thing to do, even in the face of my judgment that I *ought* to stay home. In discussing a similar case involving eating chocolate, Owens writes,

> When I don't heed my judgment and do eat the chocolates, my action is still motivated by a goal whose value is acknowledged in judgment (though outweighed, in the eyes of judgment, by another incompatible objective). In this respect my akratically eating the chocolates is on par with all the other purposive activities I engage in. The fact that this action conflicts with my 'all things considered' practical judgment need not render it unfree. And much the same can be said of an akratic intention.[47]

Ultimately, considerations in favor of ϕ-ing retain their value in the face of considerations in favor of not ϕ-ing that (are judged to) outweigh them. As a result, the considerations in favor of ϕ-ing can still be used to settle positively the question whether to ϕ and thereby justify my intention to ϕ. In other words, considerations in favor of ϕ-ing may still count as constitutive reasons for intending to ϕ, *if* we choose to 'employ' them in such a way.

Conversely, once I judge that a certain body of evidence points to the truth of *p*, I thereby become committed to the belief that the available evidence does *not* point to the truth of not-*p*. As a result, I leave myself without *reasons* for believing that not-*p*. This is because, unlike our actions, our beliefs do *not* serve a variety of goals. We cannot simply believe that *p because* believing that *p* is the more convenient thing to believe or *because* believing that *p* is the more prudent thing to believe. As Hieronymi would say, values such

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[47] "Epistemic Akrasia," 388.

as convenience and prudence qualify as *extrinsic* reasons for believing. They might provide motivation, and thereby serve as a person's reasons, for *producing* the belief that *p* by an exercise of manipulative control, but they cannot serve as reasons for *believing* that *p*. Rather, the *only* thing that counts as a constitutive reason for a belief is something that points to the truth of the belief, or the actually obtaining of the state of affairs that is the object of the belief. In a frequently cited passage of her book, *Natural Reasons*, Susan Hurley describes this point of asymmetry between theoretical and practical reasoning in the following way:

> in the case of what should be done there may be conflict within an agent, there may be conflicting reasons competing for authority. But in the case of what should be believed, truth alone governs and it can't be divided against itself or harbour conflicts. It makes sense to suppose that something is good in some respects but not others . . . in a way it does not even make sense to suppose that something is, ultimately, true in some respects but not in others.[48]

So, once I judge that the evidence supports the belief that I am *not* a good candidate for the job, I undermine the conflicting evidence in such a way as to render it impotent for supporting the belief that I *am* a good candidate for the job. In other words, when I judge that the evidence seems to establish that I am not a good candidate for the job, I become committed to the fact that the conflicting evidence no longer counts in favor of believing that I am a good candidate for the job, or no longer counts as a *reason* for believing I am a good candidate for the job.[49]

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[48] Susan Hurley, *Natural Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 133.
[49] For a discussion of how truth constrains our ability to form beliefs, see Bernard Williams's seminal article, "Deciding to Belief," in *Problems of the Self*, 136-151 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). For an argument that *denies* this sort of asymmetry between theoretical and practical reasoning see: Philip Pettit and Michael Smith, "Freedom in Belief and Desire," *Journal of Philosophy* 93 (1996): 429-449.

It is in this sense that I cannot *freely and deliberately* form the belief that I am a good candidate for the job in full awareness of my higher order judgment that it appears I am not a good candidate for the job. Owens writes,

> Is there any difficultly about akratically believing a proposition with at least (some) apparent evidence in its favour? . . . For such a belief to be formed freely and deliberately, the agent must be in a position to *judge* that a certain bit of evidence provides some reason for the belief, whilst also judging that this evidence is decisively outweighed by other evidence. But no one can freely and deliberately form the belief that p when they think the evidence sufficient to establish its falsehood, because no one can judge that there is *any* reason to believe p in such a situation.[50]

So, I cannot form the belief that I am a good candidate for the job via an exercise of evaluative control once I make the higher order judgment that the evidence appears to establish that I am not a good candidate for the job. For, according to Hieronymi's definition, evaluative control is exercised when one settles a question and thereby forms an attitude on the basis of *constitutive* reasons one takes to settle the question; and, once I make the higher order judgment, I have simultaneously committed myself to the fact that there are *no* constitutive reasons to support the belief that I am a good candidate for the job. Again, this is not to say that we do not, on occasion, *find* ourselves with beliefs we think irrational or implausible on reflection. Such recalcitrant attitudes, however, surely don't qualify as central examples of attitudes we are responsible for on Hieronymi's account of evaluative control and moral responsibility.

At this point I believe a short recap is in order. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, I see two predominant points of divergence between theoretical and practical reasoning within Hieronymi's framework of evaluative control. The first relates to the sorts

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[50] Ibid., 391.

of questions being answered in forming judgment-sensitive attitudes; the second relates to the way in which we answer those questions on the basis of constitutive reasons. I think the preceding discussion of the impossibility of epistemic akrasia sheds light on this second point of divergence in the following way. In reflecting on the evidence that bears on a question of the form whether *p*, a person may arrive at one of the following conclusions: the evidence appears to establish that *p* is the case; the evidence appears to establish that not-*p* is the case; the evidence is inconclusive. The issues surrounding the third alternative, although interesting, are tangential to the point I wish to make in this paper; so I will overlook them here. However, as I hope to have shown above, in arriving at either of the first two conclusions regarding the available evidence, a person undermines the motivational force of conflicting evidence and thereby leaves herself without competing reasons for belief. Without any sort of competing reasons, however, there is no point at which a person can *choose* which reasons to employ in justifying a *particular* belief regarding the state of the world. In others words, there is no gap in which we exercise any sort of volitional capacity in settling a question about the state of the world. I take *this* to be the primary difference in 'form' between theoretical and practical reasoning that Hieronymi alludes to in the passage presented above.

While, in the case of practical reasoning, the will (or our *volitional* capacity) plays what Carlos Steel calls an 'essential and *internal*' role in forming intentions, in the case of theoretical reasoning, the will plays an 'essential but *external*' role in forming beliefs.[51] The will allows us to make practical decisions to do things like gather evidence, direct our

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[51] Carlos Steel, "The Effect of the Will on Judgment: Thomas Aquinas on Faith and Prudence," in *The Will and Human Action: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds. Thomas Pink and M.W.F Stone (London: Routledge, 2004).

attention, call things to mind, pursue particular lines of thought, etc. However, once we employ our will in such a way as to 'place ourselves in the presence of evidence,' so to speak, the evidence does all the work. Moran alludes to this when he writes, "With respect to my own beliefs . . . there is no distance between them and how the *facts present themselves to me*, and hence no going from one to the other."[52] In other words, we are back to Hieronymi's second form of *immediacy* discussed above—that between 'finding reasons convincing' and settling questions. But, if this sort of *finding reasons convincing* is all that's left over when (by exercising our volitional capacity) we have done the work to place ourselves in the presence of reasons, in what sense can we be said to control the attitude that gets formed? In fact, there seems to be *no* sense in which we control how convincing we find the evidence and thus *no* sense in which we can be said to control how the question gets settled or the attitude gets formed.[53] Ultimately, we seem entirely passive with respect to the evidence before us. Thus, there remains no room for any exercise of agency and hence no support for Hieronymi's supposed species of *non*-voluntary control.

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[52] Richard Moran, *Authority and Estrangement*, 75 (emphasis added).

[53] It might be that one is predisposed to bias the evidence due to some implicit prejudice or latent desire. In such a scenario, even if one places oneself in the presence of the available evidence, one will be unable recognize it as such. I address this problem below and argue that this not something we can (ultimately) control.

4. CONSEQUENCES FOR ATTRIBUTIONIST ACCOUNTS OF MORAL

RESPONSIBILITY

As I mentioned in the introduction, much of the motivation for attributionist accounts of moral responsibility stems from the fact that our values and attitudes play such a fundamental role in our lives as moral beings. This sentiment is reflected throughout the writings of proponents of these accounts. For example, in his seminal article, "Involuntary Sins," Robert Adams writes,

> Our desires and emotions, though not voluntary, are responses of ours, and affect the moral significance of our lives, not only by influencing our voluntary actions, but also just by being what they are, and by manifesting themselves involuntarily. Who we are morally depends on a complex and incompletely integrated fabric that includes desires and feelings as well as deliberations and choices.[54]

And similarly, in his hugely influential article, "Freedom and Resentment," Peter Strawson writes,

> The central commonplace I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions.[55]

And again, more recently, Hieronymi states,

> By settling certain questions for oneself, by having a take on what is true, what is important, and what is to be done, one thereby constitutes those bits of one's mind relevant to the quality of one's relations with others—and so establishes what we might call one's *moral personality* or, in an older but apt phrase, the *quality of one's will*.[56]

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[54] *The Philosophical Review* 94 (1985): 3-31. Pg. 11.

[55] In *Free Will* ed. Gary Watson. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). 59-80. Pg. 62.

[56] "Responsibility for Believing," 361.

The views expressed in these passages are not controversial. There is no doubt that our values and attitudes play a central role in our lives, influencing our experience of the world, our views of ourselves, and our interactions with other people.

However, many of our personal traits influence our experience of the world and our interactions with other people. For example, my height influences my ability to reach things on high shelves in grocery stores and thus my interactions with people whom I ask for help in getting what I need. And the fact that I grew up in a certain area of the country causes me to have some affiliations but not others. My penchant for introspection left me predisposed to philosophical thinking and ultimately influenced my career decisions. And my poor eyesight prevents me from seeing the world in as fine-grained a manner as many other people and in turn has led me to have relationships with various ophthalmologists throughout the course of my life.

While all of these properties are partly constitutive of who I am and thus influence my movement through the world and my relationships with other people, most people would agree that I am not *morally responsible* for all of these properties. Neither voltionists nor attributionists want to hold people responsible things like their short stature or poor eyesight. And, more importantly, neither volitionists nor attributionists want to hold people responsible for just any *morally salient* attitude or characteristic. As mentioned previously, proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility do not want to hold people responsible for just any judgment-sensitive attitude, even those that might be sexist or racist. For they do not want to hold people responsible for sexist or racist attitudes that have been implanted by an evil demon or a mad scientist.

So how do we identify those character traits a person *is* morally responsible for? Both attributionists and volitionists appeal to our *agency* in order to ground our moral responsibility. For instance, Angela Smith writes,

> . . moral criticism, unlike many other forms of moral assessment, seems to imply something about our *activity* as rational agents. To accuse someone of 'selfishness', for example, is not simply to attribute a negative quality to her (like ugliness or lack of intelligence), but to make a claim about her *agential activity*.[57]

The real crux of the debate between attributionists and volitionists is what *sort* of agency grounds our moral responsibility. Volitionists argue that voluntary agency is the only form of agency that can warrant full credit for a bad (or good) quality and thus warrant treatment as blameworthy (or praiseworthy). Attributionists, on the other hand, argue that such accounts of moral responsibility fail to capture our ordinary practices of ascribing moral responsibility, as we only exercise voluntary agency over a small subset of the features for which we normally hold one another responsible.[58] Starting from what Strawson calls the "participant viewpoint," attributionsists seek to account for our ordinary moral interactions by grounding our moral responsibility in a unique species of non-voluntary agency that supposedly falls between voluntary activity and passivity and underpins a wider range of character traits.[59]

The intuition behind such forms of non-voluntary agency lies in the observation that certain values and attitudes, while not under our direct voluntary control, are not things that simply befall us, like our height or poor eyesight. While this seems *prima facie* plausible, I hope to have shown above that such forms of non-voluntary agency collapse on closer

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[57] "Control, Responsibility and Moral Assessment," 380.
[58] Angel Smith describes our practices of holding one another responsible in her article: "On Being Responsible and Holding Responsible," *Journal of Ethics* 11 (2007): 564-484.
[59] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment."

examination due to a failure to properly distinguish theoretical and practical reasoning. The aim of this section is to build on (and hopefully further clarify) some of my previous comments and show that, without such forms of non-voluntary control, proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility face a dilemma; they must either: (a) sneak volition in through the backdoor or (b) commit to holding people responsible for things with respect to which they are passive.

In order to illustrate this dilemma, I will examine what is considered a paradigm example of a morally reprehensible attitude on attributionist accounts of moral responsibility. In her article, "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," Angela Smith discusses a case in which an adult person, with an ordinary background and stable upbringing, believes that certain human beings are aptly conceived as intellectually inferior on the basis of their sex or race.[60] Of the case, Smith writes, " . . . the person is open to rational, and in this case moral, criticism for this attitude precisely because of its rational dependence on . . . objectionable underlying evaluative judgments."[61] I suggest we examine just such a case in getting to the bottom of our moral responsibility for such attitudes. However, to make this case more specific, I'll use an example discussed by Gideon Rosen in his article "Culpability and Ignorance." In that article, Rosen speaks of an agent, Jones, who is a "run-of-the-mill American sexist circa 1952."[62] Jones encourages his

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[60] The terms "ordinary background" and "stable upbringing" are admittedly vague. The main point is that person was not manipulated by a mad scientist or unusually influenced by something like abusive parents.

[61] 254.

[62] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 103 (2003) 61-84. Rosen begins discussing this example on pg. 66 of the article. It should be noted that Rosen used the name "Smith" in this example rather than "Jones." I have chosen to use the name "Jones" to avoid

sons to go to college, and even saves money for the purpose, but does nothing comparable for his daughters. When asked why he treats his daughters differently, Jones is said to respond, "Because they're girls," as if it's an obvious truth that their gender gives rise to different intellectual expectations.

There are several things that can go wrong in Jones' cases in order to bring about the objectionable attitude(s) expressed in his asymmetrical treatment of his sons and daughters. While proponents of attributionist accounts often suggest that a person's moral responsibility in such cases stems from a failure of rational control or poor rational judgment, oftentimes it's unclear what these failures amount to. It might be that Jones failed to consider relevant facts (or reasons) when forming his beliefs about the intellectual abilities of females; or it might be that, even in considering the relevant facts (or reasons), Jones failed to be sensitive to the facts (or reasons) in some way. Let's assume for the sake of argument that there existed at the time a significant amount of research suggesting that females tended to do better in school than their male peers and showed signs of equal or superior intellectual abilities—enough evidence to rationally support the belief that females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of males. My goal in the next part of this paper is to use the Jones example to explore the various ways in which we interact with the world (and reasons therein) to form beliefs and other attitudes. I explain each horn of the dilemma facing attributionists—that of sneaking volition in through the backdoor and that of holding people responsible for things with respect to which they are passive—by looking

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confusing the character in this example with Angela Smith, whose work I will be discussing throughout this portion of the paper.

at two possible scenarios involving Jones' access to the relevant information concerning female intellectual abiltities.

In the first scenario, Jones does *not* have access to the evidence suggesting that girls have intellectual abilities comparable to those of males and thus holds the objectionable attitude towards his daughters due to being uninformed, or unaware of the reasons for believing otherwise. I argue that there are two possible explanations for why this is the case; either: (a) Jones failed to fulfill his epistemic obligations with respect to gathering evidence and informing himself, or (b) Jones fulfilled his general epistemic duties with respect to gathering evidence but, nevertheless, failed to come across the conflicting evidence, or reasons, due to factors beyond his control. Ultimately I argue that the first explanation relies on an exercise of volitional capacities, while the second explanation points to things with respect to which Jones is passive.

In the second scenario, Jones *does* have access to the relevant evidence suggesting that females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of males but still fails to form the proper attitude with respect to his daughters. I argue that in this scenario there are, again, two possible explanations for why this happened. Either: (a) Jones participates in some form of self-deception or manipulative control, or (b) Jones has some sort of breakdown in his rational capacities. As in the previous scenario, I argue that the first explanation relies on an exercise of volitional capacities, while the second explanation points to something with respect to which Jones is passive.

Thus, in either scenario, in holding Jones responsible for his objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters, proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility are either sneaking volition in through the backdoor or holding Jones

responsible for something with respect to which he is passive. The overall argument is slightly complicated, as it comes at the dilemma indirectly, but the interplay of the various scenarios can be summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Reasons for Attitudes: Access and Use

	Evidence/Reasons Inaccessible	Evidence/Reasons Accessible
Exercise Volition	Fail Managerial Duties	Self-Deception/ Manipulative Control
Passive	External Circumstances	Breakdown in Rational Capacities

Before I move on, I should note that I am (painfully) aware that both the Jones example and my general argument are incredibly simplified. There are various complicating factors I will be unable to examine in much depth due to the scope of this paper. These complicating factors often lie in unconscious influences resulting from things such as emotional dispositions and culturally inculcated sentiments. While attributionists often allow such things to ground our moral responsibility, I argue that oftentimes this is problematic. Due to the magnitude of the issues involved, however, the argument should

be viewed simply as a sketch for further development. My hope is that my discussion at least can serve as something of a ground clearing for future debate.

4.1. Scenario One:

Reasons Inaccessible

Attributionists tend to place a lot emphasis on our general capacities to (i) interact with the world and other members of the moral community and (ii) form standing attitudes based on information we perceive and synthesize for ourselves. For example, Hieornymi writes,

> Because these attitudes embody our answer to some question(s), we exercise a distinct form   of control over them. While we do not control them in the way we control our actions, they are not, for that states to which we are passive, or simply things we can only affect and manage through our actions, like our furniture or our allergies. Because these attitudes embody our take on the world, . . . we control them by thinking about the world, about what is or is not true or important or worthwhile in it. Because our mind changes as our take on the world changes— because our minds change as we change our minds—we can said to be 'in control' of our [judgment-sensitive] attitudes.[63]

At first this seems pretty straightforward—we control certain attitudes we have about the world by reflecting on the world and drawing our own conclusions. However, the form of control embodied in "thinking about the world" becomes quite complicated when we begin to reflect on the many things it might or might not involve. I will address many of the complicating factors in more detail below; but, for now, I think we can point to two things it *must* involve—viz. information to be synthesized and an agent to do the synthesizing. In

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[63] "Responsibility for Believing," 370-371.

other words, at the most basic level there are reasons for holding various attitudes and agents who employ these reasons in taking them to bear on questions and thereby justify attitudes.

From this we can see that, at the very least, agents must have access to the reasons in order to use them in justifying the attitudes they come to hold. Accordingly, one obvious way to interpret the form of control embodied in "thinking about the world" is to think of it as physically exploring the world in order to gather evidence or information that can provide more justification for our attitudes. We certainly have epistemic (and moral) duties to gather evidence, seek advice, and generally inform ourselves of things such as the state of the world, the suffering of others, the cultural and social biases that influence us, and so on. And oftentimes these epistemic duties cannot be fulfilled by any other means than actually navigating the world—via books, classrooms and town squares.

So, if Jones' objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters resulted from his being generally uninformed about the intellectual abilities of females, it might be that Jones failed to explore the world in the right way. However, Hieronymi is clear that (i) the form of control we exercise in physically navigating the world is *managerial* (or, as the case may be, *manipulative*) control and (ii) managerial (and manipulative) control is characterized by *intentional* action. So, if my arguments in section two stand, then, as *intentional* action, the form of managerial control embodied in physically navigating the world is something we *choose* (or not) to engage in. Accordingly, the idea that Jones might have failed to 'explore the world *in the right way*', can be understood in two rather different ways. Either (i) Jones flouted his epistemic and moral duties and thereby failed to engage in the required exploration process; or (ii) Jones fulfilled his epistemic and moral duties and yet set upon

the wrong course in his exploration, thereby failing to come across the available evidence (or reasons). I will argue that the first option involves an exercise of volition on Jones' behalf and that the second option involves circumstances outside of Jones' control.

Firstly, both Smith and Scanlon often ground people's moral responsibility in their having flouted or ignored moral duties. For example, in explaining the difference between moral appraisal and other forms of assessment, Smith writes,

> Since morally objectionable actions and attitudes involve violations of what we owe to other people, they seem to pose a *direct challenge* to the moral standing and value of those to whom they are *directed*.[64]

And more explicitly, in discussing blameworthy action, Scanlon writes,

> If an action is blameworthy, then the agent has either failed to take account of or knowingly acted contrary to a reason that should, according to any principles that no one could reasonably reject, have counted against his action. So, in addition to whatever loss this action may have caused, the agent's mode of self-governance has *ignored* or *flouted* requirements flowing from another person's standing as someone to whom justification is owed.[65]

Although, in this passage, Scanlon suggests that a person can *ignore* or *flout* a moral requirement in either knowingly acting contrary to a reason *or* simply failing to take account of a reason, it's been argued that the latter alternative—if interpreted as some form of ignorance—is *not* an instance of *ignoring* or *flouting* one's duties. Neil Levy suggests in his article, "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworthy," that failing to notice (or acting from ignorance) cannot be an instance of ignoring or flouting a moral requirement, as the verbs "ignore" and "flout" invoke a more robust form of agency than acting from ignorance embodies. Levy argues that, in order for a person to *flout* or *directly challenge* a moral

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[64] "Control, Responsibility and Moral Assessment," 386 (emphasis added).
[65] *What We Owe to Each Other*, 271 (emphasis added).

requirement, the person must both grasp that requirement and deliberately disregard it or act contrary to it.[66]

As such an act seems to involve an exercise of choice on the part of the agent who is said to ignore our flout their moral requirement, Levy suggests that, in passages such as those above, Smith and Scanlon invoke the capacity for volition they seek to avoid; he writes, ". . . Scanlon seems covertly to appeal to the very volitionist theory he seeks to refute . . . Indeed, the covert appeal to volitional considerations seems . . . a constant of his and Smith's attributionism."[67] So, if Jones' objectionable attitude resulted from his being uninformed about the reasons for believing otherwise than he does and his being uninformed, in turn, resulted from his simply *ignoring* or *flouting* his obligations, then Jones would, at bottom, be exercising his capacity for volition; and thus the objectionable attitude would itself rest on an exercise of volition.

We can illustrate this by drawing on my previous discussion of Hieronymi's conception of practical reasoning. In order to *flout* his moral or epistemic duties, Jones must: (a) recognize in the process of theoretical reasoning that his moral and epistemic duties provide reasons for performing a certain set of actions $\{\phi_1, \phi_2 \ldots \phi_n\}$ related to gathering information and keeping himself informed and (b) choose to 'employ' other reasons in the process of reasoning practically about whether to not-$\{\phi_1, \phi_2 \ldots \phi_n\}$. So, if we were to hold Jones responsible for his bad attitude(s) towards his daughters in this

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[66] *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 2 (2005): 1-16. For this discussion of *ignoring* and *flouting* moral requirements, see pp. 9-10. Levy is drawing largely on Gary Watson's earlier paper, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," in *Agency and Answerability*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[67] 10.

scenario, then we would ultimately be holding him responsible for an objectionable act of volition.

On the other hand, Jones' objectionable attitude might rest on his being uniformed of the reasons for believing otherwise and yet not rest (ultimately) on an objectionable act of volition. This could happen for a number of different reasons. Jones might have sought diligently to keep himself informed of the sorts of capabilities his daughters might have that could (or should) be promoted by him, as their father. We could imagine Jones doing a significant amount of research or seeking advice from the developmental psychologist in his hometown. However, it might still be the case that, after all of that, Jones failed to come upon the relevant evidence indicating that females have intellectual capabilities comparable to those of their male peers. Maybe, in an extreme scenario, much of the data that existed at the time resulted from extensive studies that took place in the Netherlands and had yet to be published in the US. Or, in a more plausible scenario, maybe there was evidence to be found closer to home that nevertheless failed to be readily accessible to Jones because of where he lived and the implicit biases that pervaded that area and kept much of the evidence suppressed.

In this scenario, unlike the previous one, Jones acts in accordance with duty and sets out to inform himself in the required manner; however, in doing so, he nevertheless fails to come across the relevant reasons. This latter failure, however, cannot be seen as something for which Jones is at fault. Like most, Hieronymi and her cohort are rather clear that we do not control what happens to be out there in the world around us (unless, of course, we manipulate our environment in some way). So while we can control whether or not we investigate things, we cannot control the results of our investigations. Scanlon writes,

> . . . while it is up to us to judge whether appropriate reasons for [an] attitude are or are not present, it is not generally within our power to make it the case that these reasons are or are not there; this depends on facts outside us.[68]

So, in this second scenario, once Jones does his part in choosing to act in ways that are in accordance with duty, the rest is simply out of his control. Hence, in holding Jones responsible for his objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters in this case, we would be holding him responsible for something with respect to which he is passive; for the objectionable attitude would rest on Jones' being uninformed, and Jones' condition of being uninformed would, in turn, rest on facts outside him.

Next I will turn to investigating what happens when Jones both fulfills his duties to work to keep himself informed *and* comes across the reasons to support the opposing, non-objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters and yet *still* fails to form the appropriate attitude(s). I will argue that, even in such circumstances, attributionists face the same dilemma of having to sneak volition in through the backdoor or hold Jones responsible for something with respect to which he is passive.

4.2. Scenario Two:

Reasons Accessible

As seen throughout this paper, attributionists are primarily concerned with how agents *employ* reasons to answer questions for themselves and thereby justify standing attitudes. They take this form of agency to be of central concern for ascriptions of moral

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[68] *What We Owe to Each Other*, 22.

responsibility. As Angela Smith puts it, ". . . moral appraisal . . . makes claims about a persons judgmental activity, about the way she recognizes, assesses and responds to reasons."[69] Thus, it seems that the real heart of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility lies in this realm we are about to examine. For while there might be various things Jones can do to gather information and gain access to the available reasons, most of those things are clearly connected to his voluntary agency—as they involve things like physically navigating the world, directing his attention, seeking advice, etc. So, for attributionists, the real question of Jones' responsibility for his attitude(s) lies in what he does with those reasons once they've been made available to him. Attributionists tend to think this is where the subtler *non*-voluntary agency comes into play. However, as I hope to have shown above, this is a mistake; for, even here, no such form of *non*-voluntary agency exists. Building on some of my previous comments, I will show that, as a result, when we hold Jones responsible for his objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters, we are still holding him responsible for either an act of volition or something with respect to which he is passive.

In my previous discussion I treated the question of Jones' accessibility to the reasons in terms of the reasons being something like *physically* accessible to him—in the sense that he physically sought them out and failed to stumble upon them in his search for information. I will now assume the reasons are physically accessible to him—in the sense that he has stumbled upon them in his general investigations (overt or otherwise)—and will examine what else can go wrong in bringing about his objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters. Unlike in my previous discussion, I will begin with the ways in which Jones

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[69] "Control, Responsibility and Moral Assessment," 386.

might be passive with respect to the objectionable attitude and then move to discuss the ways in which the objectionable attitude might rest on an act of volition.

To begin, we should examine what Smith means when she says that moral appraisal makes claims about a person's ability to "recognize" reasons. Presumably, this ability to "recognize reasons" is something like an agent's ability to recognize that some bit of information, or some fact, *counts in favor of* performing some action or the truth of some proposition. In other words, the ability to "recognize reasons" is something like an ability to recognize that some bit of information, or some fact, one stumbles upon actually bears on a particular "world-directed" question. This is pretty intuitive. Certainly, in order for Jones to form the appropriate attitude(s) towards his daughters, he must do something more than simply stumble upon the relevant data indicating that females have comparable intellectual abilities to those of their male peers. Jones must also see the data, or information, as (i) related to and (ii) evidence for the truth of the proposition: females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of their male peers.

For example, we could imagine that, in reading the preceding section of this paper, someone might have been perturbed by the suggestion that Jones didn't have access to evidence that females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of their males peers simply because he didn't find it in a formal study, or in the advice of the developmental psychologist, or even in the sentiments of the people surrounding him. Many readers might have been inclined to respond, "The evidence was there all along. Jones had enough reason to believe his daughters were intellectually capable simply in being their father and observing *them*. If he had been a sensitive father (and husband), he would have seen that the women around him were full of intellectual virtue all along, and he would have felt the

need to save for his daughters' college education just as much as his sons'." Thus, one might have suggested that the *reasons* for the opposing, non-objectionable attitude were there all along; Jones just failed to recognize them and hence respond to them in the appropriate way.

This is a very natural sentiment and one that gets embodied in many passages throughout the work of attributionists. Smith and Scanlon often talk about people's *sensitivity* to reasons. However, it's often unclear what this *sensitivity* to reasons amounts to. Usually it's presented as some sort of disposition to react to one's environment in various ways and see some things as morally or interpersonally salient. For instance, most people see the fact that performing some action ϕ would inflict suffering on another person as a morally salient fact and thus recognize it as something that *counts in favor of* not-ϕing. So one might say that, if an agent is properly *disposed* to the suffering of others, then, in recognizing that performing some action ϕ would cause suffering to another person, the agent also will recognize that there is a *reason* that counts in favor of not-ϕing. Accordingly, if Jones' objectionable attitude rests on his failure to recognize the available data indicating that females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of males as *evidence* for the truth of that proposition—and thus as a reason, *counting in favor of* the belief that his daughters have intellectual abilities comparable to those of his sons—then it might be that Jones is improperly *disposed* to dissociate females from various intellectual virtues. As a result of this underlying disposition, Jones may be unable to *recognize* that his daughters are revealing intellectual capabilities whenever they do so.

But, if we are going to say that Jones' moral responsibility for his objectionable attitude(s) rests on his failure to recognize reasons and his failure to recognize reasons, in

turn, rests on his *disposition* to see women as generally intellectually inferior to men, then the next natural question has to do with whether Jones is morally responsible for having the objectionable disposition, or what many might call the underlying "sexist character." However, neither Smith nor Scanlon feel it is necessary to address this question. For example, Smith writes,

> . . . this questions of responsibility (namely, the responsibility one has for becoming a certain kind of person) must be distinguished from the questions of one's responsibility for the attitudes one in fact holds. In order to regard an attitude as attributable to a person, and as a legitimate basis for moral appraisal, we need not also claim that a person is responsible for becoming the sort of person who holds such an attitude. That is a separate question . . .[70]

But this flies in the face of ordinary intuitions about moral responsibility and many of the other things attributionists' have to say about moral responsibility.

For example, growing up in the time he did, it is very likely that Jones was surrounded by implicit and, oftentimes, overt sexism. As a result, Jones is likely to have culturally inculcated sentiments that, while deeply ingrained and sustained over the years, come from sources (largely) outside him. Most people take such observations as directly relevant to the question of Jones' responsibility for his attitude, even Smith herself. In her discussion of a case very similar to this—one involving a person who has Nazi sentiments as an adult after growing up in Nazi Germany—Smith grants that facts about a person's biological nature, childhood upbringing, and cultural surroundings are likely to influence our judgments of *blameworthiness*, if not moral responsibility (understood as attributability).[71]

First of all, I think this move to deemphasize a person's *blameworthiness* for her objectionable attitude in such cases is indicative of (at the very least) an inclination to lessen

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[70] "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," 267-268.
[71] Ibid., 266.

the *degree* to which the person is morally responsible for the attitude. And, in this way, Smith suggests that questions about the source of a person's character *are* relevant to questions of her responsibility for the attitude—insofar as it might lessen her *degree* of responsibility. But, regardless, I think this move to deemphasize blameworthiness is generally unhelpful for proponents of attributionist accounts of moral responsibility; for proponents of these accounts maintain that moral responsibility *simpliciter* is grounded in a person's (non-voluntary) *agency*. But if a specific exercise of this (supposed non-voluntary) agency ultimately rests on, and is caused by, a disposition that has its source outside the agent, then in what sense is it a form of agency anymore—non-voluntary or otherwise? It seems that a person's biological nature, upbringing, and cultural surroundings are things that befall her, like her short stature or poor eyesight. And thus any of a person's attitudes that (ultimately) rest on these sorts of influences, (ultimately) rest on things with respect to which the person is passive. Hence, if Jones' moral responsibility for his objectionable attitude(s) is said to rest on an exercise of some form of non-voluntary (or rational) agency and that specific 'exercise' of non-voluntary agency is said to rest, in turn, on a faulty disposition that was a product of such things as his upbringing and cultural surroundings, then, in holding Jones' responsible for his attitude, we are holding him ultimately responsible for something with respect to which he is passive.

Of course, Jones might have chosen to live in an area with a particularly sexist culture *for the very reason* that it was sexist. Insofar as something like that occurred, Jones could be held responsible for any sexist dispositions he developed as a result and thus for any sexist attitudes that arose as a result of the sexist disposition. However, if Jones simply happened to find himself in a sexist culture—in the sense that he didn't choose to the live

in the particular culture *because* it was sexist—then it's unclear how the disposition could be credited to an exercise of agency on Jones' part.   Maybe at the time social consciousness was beginning to rise, and people were becoming more aware of the implicit biases towards women as they manifested in various ways. If Jones had somehow become aware that he was likely to have implicit biases towards women that unconsciously influenced his perception of their intelligence, he might then have a duty to guard against such distortions of perception (in whatever ways were recommended). However, until Jones becomes aware of his implicit bias, it's unclear how he could be expected to guard against it; for, until he becomes aware of it, he won't know that there is anything there to guard against.[72]

As Levy points out in his article, "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworthy," attributionts might retort that volitionists face a similar problem. For, if volitionists are going to ground Jones' responsibility for his treatment of his daughters in his capacity to choose, then, in order for him to be responsible for a particular volitional failure, Jones must, in turn, be responsible for the volitional capacity itself. In other words, Jones' must

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[72] Recently there has been a move to deemphasize the traditional conception of self-deception, wherein self-deception is characterized by intentional action; instead philosophers have begun to embrace what is considered a more empirically plausible conceptions of self-deception, wherein self-deception is understood as the result of motivationally biased cognitive processes that often operate subconsciously. For a more detailed account of this view, see: Alfred R. Mele, *Self-Deception Unmasked*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). And for an interesting discussion of the implications this new theory of self-deception has on debates surrounding moral responsibility, see: Neil Levy, "Self-Deception and Moral Responsibility," *Ratio* XVII (2004) 294-311. Levy argues that, with these new conceptions of self-deception, there are no longer grounds for presuming that a person is morally responsible for engaging in self-deception. While I find Levy's article convincing and productive to the general discussion of responsibility for attitudes, I think it is misleading to call the operations of *subconscious biasing mechanisms* forms of "self-deception." To me "deception" seems to imply a more overt form of agency than we get with any type of *subconscious* process. However, this is a more general complaint I have with respect to the self-deception literature, rather than Levy's article itself.

have chosen the volitional capacity. But this, of course, gets into trouble. For how could

Jones' have chosen his volitional capacity without already having that capacity on hand?

As Levy suggests, the attributionist thought might be that moral responsibility has

to bottom out somewhere, so why not have it bottom out in a person's character rather

than a volitional capacity?[73] We certainly see the moral priority attributionists ascribe to

personal character reflected in the following passage by Smith,

> The fact that a person's evaluative judgments are usually shaped in various ways by
> her early attachments and environment does nothing to undermine the claim that
> they are still genuinely *her judgments*—that is, they are genuine tendencies on the part
> of the person to place evaluative significance certain features of the situations she
> confronts. And it is this feature that makes it appropriate, in principle, to ask a
> person to defend or disavow her attitudes.[74]

In reading this however, the first question that comes to mind is: in what sense are they *her*

judgments? While attributionists tend to associate our *true selves* more closely with the

emotions, dispositions, judgments, and standing attitudes that together form something of

an underlying "rational network" than with those parts of ourselves that have resulted from

our voluntary choices, I guess I side with Kant in thinking that our true selves are more

closely associated with our practical wills.

Accordingly, I agree with Susan Wolf and Neil Levy in thinking that what is most

important in questions of moral responsibility is what we *do* once we find ourselves with

particular normative competencies. So, we do not need to be responsible for having a

volitional capacity, in order to say we can be responsible for how we employ that capacity

once we have it. As Levy says, ". . . I may not be responsible for whether I am in the

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[73] "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworhty," 7-8.
[74] "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," 267.

responsibility ballpark, but I am responsible for what I do when I find myself there."[75] In order for us to consider Jones in the responsibility ballpark—especially one that is characterized by an ability to *employ* reasons in justifying attitudes—Jones must first have access to the reasons, both physically and *psychologically*. This is where I would like to turn next. My last investigation will concern what might happen once Jones recognizes the reasons for believing that females have intellectual abilities comparable to those of males and yet still holds the objectionable attitude(s) towards his daughters. Towards the beginning of *What We Owe to Each Other,* Scanlon defines judgment-sensitive attitudes in the following way:

> *Judgment-sensitive Attitude:* An attitude is judgment-sensitive if it is part of being the attitude that it is that this complex of dispositions should be sensitive to a particular kind of judgment.[76]

And similarly in her article, "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," Angela Smith construes judgment-sensitive as: "mental states [that] are linked to particular judgments in such a way that, if one sincerely holds a particular evaluative judgment, then the mental state in question should (or should not) occur."[77] Both authors conceive of these attitudes as mental states that *should* reflect our underlying judgments about reasons, but regrettably might not.

So, how should we understand this failure of reflection? As I mentioned in section 3.2 Scanlon suggests that, after making a judgment about the available reasons, a person's failure to form the corresponding attitude is caused by a *breakdown* in her rational capacities.

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[75] My discussion in this paragraph and the one before it is deeply indebted to Neil Levy's discussion on pp. 7-8 of his article, "The Good, the Bad and the Blameworthy."
[76] 21.
[77] 253.

Recall, Scanlon says, "Akratic actions (and irrational thoughts) are cases in which a person's rational capacities have *malfunctioned*, not cases in which these capacities are overmastered . . ."[78] In giving such an account, however, it seems Scanlon has not only undermined any sense of agency but actually indicated a thwarting of agency. For, if our moral responsibility for judgment-sensitive attitudes is grounded in our rational agency (or our ability to make rational judgments), then it seems that, in making the appropriate underlying judgment, one has exercised her agency in a praiseworthy manner. The fact that the judgment fails to get reflected in the attitude seems beside the point. To use a Hieronymi-inspired example, it would be like someone experiencing an inopportune muscle twitch when trying to grab a child out of the way of oncoming traffic. Thus, if Jones has made the appropriate judgment that men are not intellectually superior to women, then he has exercised his rational agency—i.e. that form of agency that is said to ground his moral responsibility—in a praiseworthy manner. The fact that there has been some *breakdown* in his rational capacity only seems to thwart the agency he did exercise. It seems the objectionable attitude is something that simply befell him and is thus something with respect to which he is passive.

As noted above, Hieronymi finds this aspect of Scanlon's account of judgment-sensitive attitudes unsatisfactory. Instead, she presents an account of rational agency that emphasizes our ability to *employ* reasons in settling questions for ourselves. If you recall, Hieronymi suggests that akratic attitudes are the result of our first concluding that the balance of reasons favors, say, the belief that not-p but then employing a reason in favor of p to settle the question of whether p and thereby form the belief that p. I already discussed

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[78] *What We Owe to Each Other*, 40 (emphasis added).

the problems with this account in great depth in section 3.2. However, now I would like briefly to address what I think is actually going on in Hieronymi's account of akratic beliefs.

It seems that when Hieronymi says that a person is "employing a reason" to "settle" a question what is actually going on is the person is using a bit of evidence to force an answer onto a question. In other words, instead of rational justification we're getting *rationalization*. For example, when I judge that the evidence seems to suggest that I am not a good fit for the job for which I am interviewing, I may then seek to justify a belief that I am a good candidate for the job by emphasizing to myself that I get along well with the boss; but what I am doing is not actually justifying the belief that I am a good candidate for the job but rather rationalizing it to myself. But directing my attention onto selective evidence is certainly something I *do*. In other words, it is certainly something I voluntarily engage in. In fact, at one point, Hieronymi actually classifies this sort of agency as a form of *managerial* control; she writes,

> You might *manage* your own attitudes . . . by convincing or persuading yourself that the reasons at hand support an alternative conclusion. You might intentionally direct your attention in certain ways, or provide yourself with alternative interpretations of your situation, or persuade yourself to 'see things differently,' or take steps to convince yourself that your own previous response is unjustified or that an alternative response is equally justified.[79]

As *managerial*—or maybe, more aptly, *manipulative*—control, this would be an instance of intentional action and would thus qualify as a form of self-deception rather than genuine belief formation. So, if Jones were to engage in something like this after judging that the evidence indicated that women are just as intellectually capable as men, he might be blameworthy for his attitude(s) towards his daughters; but ultimately his responsibility

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[79] "Two Kinds of Agency," 152 (emphasis added0.

would rest on intentional action and thus on an exercise of volition rather than some form of non-voluntary control.

5. CONCLUSION

Like many philosophical projects, the attributionist project begins with a puzzle from ordinary experience. The puzzle goes something as follows. On one hand, we often assume people can be responsible only for what is voluntary. But, on the other hand, we often hold people responsible for their beliefs and other attitudes, which many people think are *not* under our direct voluntary control. The proposed solution to the puzzle lies in the observation that, although beliefs and other such attitudes are not under our direct voluntary control, they are not the sorts of things that simply befall us, like a short stature or poor hearing. In response, attributionists suggest that we exercise a unique species of *non*-voluntary agency with respect to many of our beliefs and other attitudes and are thus appropriate subjects of moral praise and blame on account of such attitudes.

In this paper, I hope to have shown that such forms of non-voluntary control or agency are untenable because they rest on a failure to adequately distinguish theoretical and practical reasoning. Once that distinction is restored and we examine theoretical reasoning more carefully, it becomes much harder to see how we are active with respect to forming beliefs many other of our attitudes. We are certainly active with respect to gathering evidence, directing our attention, pursuing certain lines of thought, etc. However, these activities represent indirect forms of what Hieronymi calls 'managerial' control and thus qualify as intentional, voluntary action. Once we have exercised such indirect forms of voluntary control, it is no longer up to us how the world-directed questions get settled and the beliefs get formed. Thus it seems there is no unique species of non-voluntary control we exercise in forming beliefs and many other attitudes.

Ultimately, if proponents of attributional accounts of moral responsibility are unable to sustain some form of *non*-voluntary agency or control, they seem to face a dilemma: they must either sneak volition in through the back door or commit to holding people responsible for things with respect to which they are passive. In the case of practical reasoning, there is always a choice of which reasons to 'employ;' so, in holding a person responsible for her intentions, it seems we are always holding her responsible for an act of volition. In the case of theoretical reasoning, on the other hand, a person cannot select her reasons for belief; for the reasons are always determined beforehand. Although in some cases a person might 'choose' her reasons for belief by directing her attention to selective evidence, this only occurs when the person aims to pervert her own beliefs and form a picture of the world the way she wants it to be rather than the way it is. In those cases, the person would be engaging in a form of self-deception rather than genuine belief formation. If we were to hold her responsible for the resulting belief, we would be holding her responsible for an act of volition rather than some unique act of belief formation. In most cases, however, we do not 'choose' which reasons to employ in forming our beliefs; instead, we lets the reasons do the work. If we hold people responsible for their beliefs in those sorts of cases, we would ultimately be holding them responsible for something with respect to which they are passive.

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