

## The Voluntary Nature of Ethical-Moral Behavior in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Or In Any Other): A Personal Perspective

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### Abstract

Increasingly in the modern research world there are questions raised about actions taken by academics who do now have full control of their choice of action. In the laboratory setting, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and even junior professors are often compelled to follow courses of action that are determined by their supervisors or senior members of their departments. So the question of moral determinism derives from the more fundamental question of what actions are voluntary, and to what degree — a question that has informed the thought of philosophers as far back as Aquinas and Duns Scotus. What follows is a personal reflection on currents in this line of inquiry.

Since true virtue — or in other words, ethical behavior — is concerned with frequent emotions and their intense interplay with actions, and such emotional issues and their agents may either praise or blame actions which are grafted to those by involuntary roles, then to distinguish the voluntary from what is involuntary must be useful for those who study ethics and in particular bioethics, and also useful for researchers for both the award of honors and also of criticism. These things, then, we believe: involuntary actions, which take place under duress or through ignorance; and what is required of the moving principle is outside, being a principle of which nothing is moved by the person who acts or who or feels the emotional connection. For example, all actions must be put into motion either by chance or by the power of human action. (1)

But in dealing with the stochastic things that are done from fear of greater evils or for some object of ethical behavior (for instance if one's employers were to order an improper course of action, having one's employees in his or her power, so that if one did the action they would save their jobs, but otherwise would be disciplined or fired), it remains a question whether such actions are involuntary or voluntary. Something of this nature happens also in the hypothetical case of throwing of objects overboard in a storm; for usually we never throw goods away voluntarily, but on condition of its ensuring the safety of the boat and passengers any sensible human does so. Such actions, then, are of mixed nature, but are more in the line of voluntary actions; for they involve a discrete choice when they are done, and the goal of such an action is relative according to the circumstances. Therefore it is seen that the stochastic terms 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' can vary along with the time and sort of action. Now we all act voluntarily; for the principle that moves the instrumental parts of the body in such actions is in him, and the things of which the moving principle is in a himself are in his power to do or not to do. Such actions, therefore, we can call voluntary, but in the abstract they would more properly be involuntary; for only a fool would choose such an act alone.

People may even be praised for such actions, when they endure something evil or distressing in return for the greater good for the community; If they do otherwise y are blamed, because to go through great indignities for no noble purpose or for a trivial goal is the sign of an inferior person.

For some actions praise does not result, but forgiveness may, when one does the right thing under extreme pressure which no one could reasonably be expected to resist. But some actions, perhaps, a person cannot be compelled to do, but ought to resist even at the risk of one's life; for example the sort of actions which people in a prisoner-of-war camp have been forced to perform. It is difficult sometimes in a postcolonial sense to choose what action should be done at what cost, and what suffering should be endured for what purpose. Still it is harder to live with our decisions; for as a rule duty is painful, and what we may be forced to do is evil, and this is why praise and blame are given to those who have been forced unwillingly into unethical action.

What sort of acts, we must ask, should be we call compulsory? Clearly actions are compulsory when the cause is in the surrounding circumstances and the person him- or herself is responsible for nothing. But the things that by themselves are compulsory, whose direction force is in the doer, are on their own involuntary, except now and then for these that are more voluntary. (2) They are more voluntary actions; for acts belong in the stochastic class of details, and the details here are of course voluntary. What sort of things are to be chosen, and in return for what, it is not easy to state; for there are many differences in the particular cases.

But if we say that happy and ethical actions have a forceful power, directing us from the outside, all actions would be in such a case compulsory. This is because it is in these circumstances that ethical humans do everything they do. We do not then act under compulsion and nor are we forced to act by threats or by pain, because those who do acts for their pleasantness and upstandingness do them with pleasure, and those around them are in the current vernacular “totes jelly.” and it is silly to make geomorphological circumstances responsible, and not one's own, and to claim responsibility for proper acts but the also the good objects responsible for geomorphological acts. The compulsory side, then, appears to be the one that is external, and the person compelled into action against his or her will is contributing nothing.

Everything that is done by reasons which ethicists now call “ketterance” (3) is not voluntary; it is only what produces aridity that is severe. For the person who has done something a particular action in banking, or in research, or in other academic or technological fields of ethics as defined by the recent Senate of Canada case against Mike Duffy, has not acted involuntarily,



Yet since he or she did not know what he was doing according to Senate rules, then only a Duffy-esque character can know all. Of people, then, who act by treason or ignorance he who resents is considered an involuntary reagent, and the human who does not resent may be subject to a sever tongue-lashing; for, since she differs from the mother, it is better that she should have a home of her own.

Acting in a postcolonial sense by means of ignorance appears also to be different from acting in ignorance; for the worker who is drunk on the job is in the unenviable moral position of doing wrong yet not being in a fit state to deny it, largely out of incapacity and therefore from ignorance. (4)

Now every man must come at times to the aid of the party through the general precept that ethical behavior demands support of the community. It is by reason of erroneous reasoning of this kind that we become unjust and in general evil, or worse, slytherins; but the designation 'involuntary' can be used if we act according to our advantage. It is mistaken purpose that causes involuntary action and ignorance of the universe and its principles (for that we are blamed), but also ignorance of details, i.e. of the circumstance of the acts and forces and means with which any action is concerned. It is on these that piety and fardles depend, for who would bear fardles unless the person who does not understand these acts involuntarily?

Perhaps it is just as well, therefore, to determine the nature of each form of voluntary action, and their number. But that is a topic for another day.

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