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## Nicomachean Ethics VII. 4: Plain and Qualified *akrasia*

HENDRIK LORENZ

At a party, who would get pleasure from such a person, knowing that he delights in the main course and the wine more than in his friends, and that he loves the whores more than his companions?

Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I. 5, 4

To delight in such things, and to love them most of all, is beastly.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III. 10, 1118<sup>b</sup>3–4

### 1. Background

Aristotle's audience would have been readily familiar both with an absolute use of the word *ἀκρασία* ('lack of control'), and of related words, and with an augmented use governing a genitive. Xenophon employs *ἀκρασία* language in both ways, thinking of the *ἀκρατής* ('the person who lacks control') spoken of absolutely as a character type identified by lack of control over, or weakness in relation to, bodily pleasures and pains or discomforts.<sup>1</sup> While he employs the language of psychological control and its lack for the most part with regard to bodily pleasures and pains, he does write of having control over the pleasure of (acquiring or possessing) property.<sup>2</sup> Isocrates likewise conceives of *ἀκρασία* as lack of control

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<sup>1</sup> The absolute use is in evidence, for instance, in *Mem.* I. 5 and IV. 5, 9. In both places, the uncontrolled person is thought of as being weak in relation to food, drink, and sex, as well as in dealing with discomforts, such as lack of sleep. Examples of the augmented use include *Mem.* I. 2, 2 (*ἀφροδισίων ἀκρατεῖς*), and *Oec.* XII. 11–12 (*ἀκρατεῖς οἴνου, ἔννου*).

<sup>2</sup> At *Mem.* I. 5, 6, Xenophon says about Socrates that he had control not only over the bodily pleasures, but also over pleasure that arises 'through property' (*ἀκράτει ... καὶ τῆς διὰ τῶν χρημάτων, sc. ἡδονῆς*).

over pleasures. He adds the idea that lack of control involves pursuing some pleasure against one's own currently held view about what it is best to do.<sup>3</sup> Occurrences of the absolute use of *ἀκρασία* words are relatively rare in Plato's writings.<sup>4</sup> Plato mostly employs such words in the augmented use, adding explicit specification of what it is over which the person in question is held to lack control.<sup>5</sup> In the *Laws*, he writes of lack of control both over pleasure and over anger. He also subordinates lack of control over anger to a broader notion of lack of control over pleasures or pains,<sup>6</sup> presumably because he takes anger to be a potent mixture of certain forms of pain and pleasure.

One of the questions Aristotle takes up in *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth *NE*) VII. 4 is whether there is such a thing as lack of control without qualification. The discussion in VII. 4 is prepared for by a number of remarks in preceding chapters, notably the following statement of an *aporía* in VII. 2:

Further, if there are lack of control and control about all things, who is the person who lacks control without qualification? For no one suffers from all the forms of lack of control, but we do say of some people that they lack control, speaking without qualification. (*NE* VII. 2, 1146<sup>b</sup>2–5)<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle's list of *λεγόμενα* ('things said') in VII. 1 includes the item that people are said to lack control also over anger, honour, and profit. In addition to such forms of lack of control, there is, of course, lack of control over certain bodily pleasures, the condition that some people identify with self-indulgence (VII. 1, 1145<sup>b</sup>16–17). However, these various forms of lack of control are very diverse sorts of character dispositions. Few people, if any, will exemplify all of them at once. In any case, in saying about someone simply that they lack control, people plainly do not have in mind that the person in question suffers from all of the forms of lack of control: that he or she lacks control over the relevant bodily pleasures, over anger, honour, profit, and whatever else people may be seen to lack control over. This undermines what is perhaps the most obvious construal of what unqualified lack of control may come to: that no qualification applies because the person in question fully exhibits the complete range of lack of control. (Compare the perfectly virtuous person, who is good without qualification.) However, if this most obvious construal fails, as it clearly does, then it remains to be seen what disposition of character constitutes lack of control without qualification. In fact,

<sup>3</sup> According to Isocrates' picture, lack of control involves not sticking with the results of one's reasoning, without, however, revising one's assessment about what is most advantageous: in pursuing pleasure, the uncontrolled agent acts in disregard of what is advantageous. See *Antid.* 221.

<sup>4</sup> I have found three occurrences: *Grig.* 525A4, *Resp.* 461B2, and *Leg.* 734B5.

<sup>5</sup> I have found six occurrences of augmented uses, one from the *Timaeus* (86D6), the other five from the *Laws* (636C6, 869A2, 886A9, 908C2, and 934A4).

<sup>6</sup> *Leg.* 934A1–5: some people do wrong because of lack of control over pleasures or pains (*δι' ἀκράτειαν ἡδονῶν ἢ λυπῶν*), having fallen victim to cowardly fears, certain appetites, feelings of jealousy, or feelings of anger that are difficult to remedy (*ἐν ... θυμοῖς δυσίατοις γιγνόμενος*).

<sup>7</sup> My translations from the *Nicomachean Ethics* are heavily indebted to those in S. Broadie and C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, 2002).

one may wonder whether there is any legitimate basis on which to say about any kind of person that he or she lacks control without qualification.

In VII. 3, Aristotle makes some initial constructive remarks on these and some related questions. One question that needs to be looked into, he says there, is what sorts of things we should say control and its lack are about. He then makes the question more specific by adding 'I mean whether we should say that they are about every kind of pleasure and pain, or about some specified kinds' (VII. 3, 1146<sup>b</sup>9–11). In the course of outlining how these and some other questions should be approached, Aristotle makes an important commitment:

We then turn to the question whether or not there are lack of control and control about all kinds of things. For lacking control without qualification is not about all kinds of things, but about those things that self-indulgence is about. (NE VII. 3, 1146<sup>b</sup>18–20)

He is hereby claiming, first, that there is such a thing as unqualified lack of control and, secondly, as we will see shortly, that its proper domain is constituted by certain bodily pleasures, or by certain bodily pleasures and pains. He has not yet offered any argument for these claims. In their context, they raise a number of questions. First, given that there plainly are forms of lack of control other than unqualified lack of control, it remains to see whether lack of control, broadly or generically speaking, is, as Aristotle puts it, about 'all kinds of things', or whether there is room for a more specific account of the domain, or domains, of lack of control, broadly speaking. Secondly, given that no one exemplifies all the forms of lack of self-control, Aristotle's commitment to the existence of unqualified lack of self-control calls for an explanation as to why it is legitimate to say about people with a certain disposition of character that they lack control without qualification, even though they do not exhibit the full range of the various forms of lack of control. Thirdly, given that there are a variety of forms of lack of control, Aristotle needs to justify his claim that precisely one of these forms—namely, lack of control over certain bodily pleasures, or over certain bodily pleasures and pains—counts as unqualified lack of control.

The last two questions arise specifically from Aristotle's commitment to an unqualified form of lack of self-control. Given that these two questions are perhaps the most urgent ones, it seems reasonable to approach the cluster of questions that Aristotle must now address by announcing discussion of the questions 'whether there is someone who suffers from lack of control without qualification, or whether all those who lack control do so in some particular way; and what sorts of things unqualified lack of control is about, if there is such a thing' (VII. 4, 1147<sup>b</sup>20–1). We have now arrived at the beginning of NE VII. 4.

## 2. NE VII. 4

The chapter can be divided into three parts. It begins with Aristotle announcing the topic to be discussed, and making an introductory comment (1147<sup>b</sup>20–3). As

Cook Wilson showed,<sup>8</sup> the remainder of the chapter consists of two versions of a distinction between qualified and plain lack of control. The two versions—which I will refer to as Versions A and B—express roughly the same overall train of thought. That train of thought begins with a distinction between different kinds of sources of pleasure (section A1, 1147<sup>b</sup>23–31; section B1, 1148<sup>a</sup>22–8). Based on that distinction, it proceeds to identify various qualified forms of lack of control (section A2, 1147<sup>b</sup>31–1148<sup>a</sup>4; section B2, 1148<sup>a</sup>28–1148<sup>b</sup>9), and then turns to unqualified lack of control (section A3, 1148<sup>a</sup>4–13; section B3, 1148<sup>b</sup>9–14). Version A closes by adding two supplementary remarks that are not paralleled in Version B. It is not just, however, that Version B almost exactly replicates the train of thought that underlies Version A. We will also see that there are a number of significant differences between the two versions. I will argue that when these differences are taken together and considered in the context of NE VII. 1–10 and also of Aristotle's ethical writings more generally, they suggest rather strongly that Version B was meant, not to add to Version A, but to replace it.

Before comparing the two versions with one another, however, I will first (in the present section) have a detailed look at the chapter more or less sentence by sentence, commenting on interpretative and philosophical issues as they arise. Having done that and having argued (in Section 3) for my view that Version B contains a revised exposition of the distinction between plain and qualified control, I will conclude with some remarks about how that distinction enables Aristotle to answer at least some of the questions that arise from his commitment to plain lack of control, against the background of the earlier chapters of NE VII.

The topic for discussion that Aristotle announces at the beginning of the chapter is whether anyone suffers from lack of control without qualification, or whether all those who lack control do so in some particular way. According to the second alternative, every case of lack of control is a case of some specific form or kind of lack of control. It would not follow that it would never be appropriate to say about anyone that he or she suffers from lack of control, speaking without qualification. But in speaking in this way, one would never be fully specific as to what one took the person's disposition of character to be. A full specification of any uncontrolled person's disposition of character would always require specifying in what particular way the person in question lacks control. This would be done by indicating what it is over which he or she lacks control. On the first alternative, by contrast, there is a disposition of character that is lack of control without qualification. On this view, in ascribing lack of control to someone, speaking without qualification, one is, or may well be, ascribing to him or her a certain disposition of character with full specificity. Since suffering from lack of control is always a matter of suffering from lack of control over something or other, and since no one lacks control over the whole variety of things that people are seen to lack control over, as Aristotle says at NE VII. 2, 1146<sup>b</sup>3, it would follow that it is part of having the disposition that is unqualified lack of control that one lacks

<sup>8</sup> J. Cook Wilson, *Aristotelian Studies I: On the Structure of the Seventh Book of the Nicomachean Ethics, Chapters I–X*, (Oxford, 1879), henceforth 'Cook Wilson'.

control over this or that kind of thing. Thus, as Aristotle says, one needs to discuss the question of what constitutes the proper domain of unqualified lack of control, if there is such a disposition of character. In other words, if there is unqualified lack of control, one needs to address the question of what those suffering from it lack control over.

Aristotle begins his discussion of the topics just announced with an introductory comment: 'It is clear that controlled and resistant types, and those who lack control and those who are soft, are about pleasures and pains' (NE VII. 4, 1147<sup>b</sup>21–3).<sup>9</sup> This claim should give us pause for a moment or two. So far as lack of control is concerned, it is not immediately clear whether this opening claim should be understood broadly, as pertaining to lack of control broadly or generically speaking, or narrowly, as pertaining only to unqualified lack of control.<sup>10</sup> I think that there is good reason to opt for the broad interpretation. It would be odd for Aristotle to assert that it is clear that unqualified lack of control and some other dispositions are about pleasures and pains, right away after raising the questions whether there is such a disposition as unqualified lack of control and, if there is, what it is about. Secondly, understanding Aristotle's claim broadly in the way suggested prepares us nicely for the distinctions that follow immediately in both versions of the subsequent discussion. Both in Version A and in Version B, Aristotle proceeds by distinguishing between different kinds of sources of pleasure, so as to distinguish on that basis between unqualified lack of control on the one hand and various qualified forms on the other. If the introductory claim is understood broadly, the train of thought will run as follows. It is in any case clear that the relevant dispositions of character, including lack of control in all its forms, are in some way or other about pleasures and pains. But the things that give people pleasure differ in kind, and there turn out to be significant differences among the forms of lack of control, depending on what kinds of sources of pleasure they relate to.

We may still wonder why Aristotle thinks it is clear that lack of control in general—which includes lack of control over such things as anger, honour, and profit—is about pleasures and pains. For we might think that at least some forms of lack of control—certainly lack of control over anger, and perhaps lack of

<sup>9</sup> The Greek text I am translating is this: ὅτι μὲν οὖν περὶ ἡδονῶν καὶ λύπας εἰδὼν οἱ τ' ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ καρτερικοὶ καὶ οἱ ἀκρατεῖς καὶ οἱ μαλακοί, φανερόν. None of the editions I consulted prints the definite article before *μαλακοί*. Nonetheless, Susemihl's apparatus, unlike Bywater's, indicates that there is extremely strong manuscript support for including that article: three (namely, L<sup>b</sup>, O<sup>b</sup>, and M<sup>b</sup>) out of the principal four manuscripts have it (only K<sup>b</sup> seems not to have it). Without that article, it may seem hard to sustain the interpretation that I will argue for presently, to the effect that *οἱ ἀκρατεῖς* should be understood broadly, so as to refer to akratic characters of all the various kinds or forms. For as we will learn shortly, people are not called soft except with regard to certain kinds of bodily pain—not even, I take it, soft in some suitably qualified way. It follows, then, that at least many of those suffering from qualified forms of lack of control do not suffer from softness, except by coincidence.

<sup>10</sup> One might be inclined to think the latter on the grounds that Aristotle is mentioning softness as well as control, resistance, and lack of control. Aristotle will point out shortly that softness is related specifically and narrowly to certain sorts of bodily pains (1148<sup>a</sup>11–13).

control over honour as well—are not pleasure-directed, appetitive forms of lack of control, but rather are forms of lack of control over spirited desires. The intended objects of *such* desires, one might add, are not pleasures or pleasant experiences, but such things as retaliation, revenge, honour, or victory. Now, it does seem clear that Aristotle partly disagrees with this view. As we will see, he treats lack of control over honour and victory as appetitive forms of lack of control, and so he must think that these are ways of lacking control over appetitive desires, whose intended objects are certain kinds of pleasure. On the other hand, he does not treat lack of control over anger in that way. In fact, in NE VII. 6 he will go on to distinguish sharply between lack of control over anger on the one hand and lack of control over appetitive desires on the other. Thus it seems that he thinks lack of control over anger involves lacking control over a kind of desire that is not appetitive. Presumably he thinks that the intended object of this kind of desire is, not some kind of pleasure, but retaliation or revenge. In other words, I take it that he thinks the intended object of that kind of desire is the performance of a certain type of act, rather than having one's sensibility affected in a certain way.

But however that may be, there is in any event no reason to take the claim that lack of control in general is about pleasures and pains to be equivalent to the claim that lack of control in all cases is lack of control specifically over appetitive desires or aversions. To say that lack of control in general is about pleasures and pains is only to say that the things that people are seen to lack control over are pleasures and pains. For every form of lack of control, that is to say, one can pinpoint at least some kind of pleasure, or some kind of pain, over which people with the disposition in question lack control. The claim is just that these people are disposed so that pleasures or pains of the relevant kinds tend to get them to act or behave in certain ways that they realize are inappropriate. The claim is not that whenever any form of lack of control manifests itself, the intended object of the desire on which the person in question acts is always specifically and exclusively to secure some pleasure, or to avoid some pain. Thus what I take Aristotle to be saying in making the introductory comment that we have been concerned with is perfectly compatible with the view that one form of lack of control—namely, lack of control over anger—is about a certain kind of affective state that can be described as a form of pain but that also involves pleasure and that has built into it a desire to perform a certain type of act, say to retaliate.<sup>11</sup>

We come to the beginning of Version A. Aristotle starts by distinguishing between two kinds of things that produce pleasure, necessary ones on the one hand, and on the other hand things that are not necessary, but choiceworthy in themselves (*αἰπετά* ... *καθ' αὐτὰ*), though they admit of excess. In writing of necessary things that give us pleasure, Aristotle seems to have in mind types of activities that our nature forces upon us, such as eating and having sex. In

<sup>11</sup> At EE III. 2, 1231<sup>b</sup>35, Aristotle describes 'what we call anger (*θυμὸς*)' as a form of pain (cf. 1231<sup>b</sup>6–7). On the anticipatory pleasure involved in anger, see *Rh.* 1.11, 1370<sup>b</sup>10–15. On the desiderative element of anger, see *De an.* 1. 1, 403<sup>a</sup>30–1: the formal aspect of anger is that it is a desire to inflict pain in return for pain.

order to go on living, both as individuals and collectively as human beings, we must eat and drink, and at any rate most of us must have sex.<sup>12</sup> He further clarifies<sup>13</sup> the necessary sources of pleasure by adding that they are those kinds of bodily things that were earlier established as the proper domain of self-indulgence and temperance. According to the relevant discussions both in *Eudemian Ethics* (henceforth *EE*) III. 2 and in *NE* III. 10, temperance and self-indulgence are chiefly about certain pleasures associated with the sense of touch, centring on the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex. Aristotle illustrates the optional, but choiceworthy sort of sources of pleasure by way of an open-ended list: 'I mean things like victory, honour, wealth, and good and pleasant things of this kind' (1147<sup>b</sup>29–31).

In saying of such things that they are choiceworthy in themselves, Aristotle is probably not meaning to indicate that all of these are choiceworthy as ends or goals rather than only as means. For elsewhere he says that wealth is not choiceworthy as an end or goal.<sup>14</sup> Rather, the idea seems to be that these are things that are choiceworthy as such and in general, though in some specific situations they may not be. They do, after all, admit of excess. A relevant parallel for this use of language can be found in Aristotle's discussion of mixed actions in *NE* III. 1.<sup>15</sup> He there says that certain actions (for instance, jettisoning one's cargo) are 'in themselves involuntary' (*καθ' αὐτὰ μὲν ἀκούσια*), but 'choiceworthy now and in return for these things' (1110<sup>b</sup>3–5).<sup>16</sup>

Aristotle does not say explicitly that what he calls the necessary sources of pleasure are not choiceworthy in themselves, though one might think that this is implied by what he says. In any case, he may think that eating, drinking, and having sex are not choiceworthy as such and in general, but choiceworthy only at certain times and up to certain limits, as dictated by the relevant bodily needs. He should not be understood as holding that what he calls the bodily enjoyments (1148<sup>a</sup>4–6) are not choiceworthy at all. This is, first, for the good reason that he neither says nor implies such a thing. And, secondly, when he turns to the question of whether the bodily pleasures that self-indulgence is about are choiceworthy, his suggestion is that they are good (and so, I assume, choiceworthy) up to a point (*NE* VII. 14, 1154<sup>a</sup>8–21).

Having distinguished between the two relevant kinds of sources of pleasure,<sup>17</sup> Aristotle proceeds to identify various qualified forms of lack of control in terms

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *EE* III. 2, 1231<sup>a</sup>26–8, where the insensible character is said to be deficient with regard to those things in which for the most part all people must share and take pleasure (*ὅσων ἀνάγκη κοινῶν ἐν ὧς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶσι πάντας καὶ χάριεν*).

<sup>13</sup> The *καί* in 1147<sup>b</sup>27 is, I think, epexegetic.

<sup>14</sup> *NE* I. 5, 1096<sup>a</sup>5–9. I agree here with S. Broadie, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, 'Philosophical introduction', 56.

<sup>15</sup> I owe the references both to this passage and to 1129<sup>b</sup>1–4 to Irwin's note *ad loc.*

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle also puts the same point by saying that such actions are 'involuntary without qualification' (*ἀπλῶς δ' ἴσως ἀκούσια*, 1110<sup>a</sup>18). Note also another passage to which Irwin draws attention, 1129<sup>b</sup>1–4, where Aristotle says that the goods of fortune are 'without qualification always good' (*ἀπλῶς ἀεὶ ἀγαθά*), 'but for some person not always (*τὰ δ' οὐκ αἰεὶ*)'.

<sup>17</sup> I agree with Gauthier and Jolif *ad loc.*, that there is no need to think that Aristotle means the distinction to be exhaustive. These may just be the kinds of sources of pleasure that he needs for his present purposes.

of going to excess in pursuit of pleasant things that are not necessary, but that are choiceworthy in themselves:

About people who go to excess with regard to those things, against the correct account within them, we do not say that they lack control without qualification. Rather, we say that they lack control with the additions 'over property' (*χρημάτων*), 'over profit', 'over honour' and 'over anger'. We do not say that they lack control without qualification, on the grounds that they are different, and that they are said to lack control by virtue of resemblance; as with Anthrosos the Olympian victor, where the common account hardly differed from the specific one, but nevertheless was different. (1147<sup>b</sup>31–1148<sup>a</sup>2)

As has been pointed out by others,<sup>18</sup> it is not easy to see how lack of control over anger is supposed to fit into Aristotle's train of thought. The answer, I suggest, is that a person lacking control over anger is someone who, against his own better judgement, goes to excess in pursuit of something that, apart from being pleasant, also is good and choiceworthy in itself, though of course it does admit of excess. The good in question is revenge.

As is clear from Aristotle's account of mildness in *NE* IV. 5, he thinks that virtuous people will be angry as, when, and with whom one should be. They will not simply put up with, or turn a blind eye to, abusive treatment meted out to them or their friends or family members. Anger as Aristotle conceives of it is or involves a desire for retaliation. Unless there are good reasons for not retaliating, Aristotle's virtuous person will respond to a slight or insult by retaliating as, when, and against whom it is appropriate to do so. Like anyone else, the virtuous person will take pleasure in the accomplishment of retribution. Aristotle evidently thinks that taking revenge is a potent source of pleasure. It is hardly one of the activities that nature forces upon us, something that we need to do so as to go on living, either individually or collectively.<sup>19</sup> It is reasonable to assume, on the other hand, that Aristotle thinks of taking revenge as something that, apart from being pleasant, also is good and choiceworthy in itself. Once that is seen, it becomes clear how lack of control over anger is supposed to fit into Aristotle's train of thought. His audience would not, I think, have needed to be told explicitly that taking revenge for an act of abuse is good and choiceworthy as such and in general, though it does admit of excess.

<sup>18</sup> Cook Wilson, 65; Gauthier and Jolif *ad loc.* The problem is more severe than Cooper takes it to be (J. Cooper, 'Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value', in M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford, 1996), 81–114, 88 n. 12; repr. in his *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, 1999), 253–80). We are expected to recognize, he suggests, that 'θυμῆς' is figuring in the account as a source of distress or pain'. What Aristotle is clearly claiming, however, is that we ascribe lack of control over anger on the basis of excess against better judgement in relation to things that give pleasure, and that are optional though choiceworthy in themselves. *πρὸς τὰ πάντα* ('with regard to those things') at 1147<sup>b</sup>31 must refer to those kinds of sources of pleasure that are not necessary, but choiceworthy in themselves.

<sup>19</sup> It is important to be clear that revenge is not just self-defence. It involves actively going after the person perceived to be responsible for the apparent abuse, and inflicting pain on him or her in return for the pain received. This, of course, need not always involve physical violence. It may, for instance, take the form of a stinging remark, as when the magnanimous person uncharacteristically resorts to abusive speech (*καικολογία*) in response to an insult (*NE* IV. 3, 1125<sup>a</sup>8–9).

Aristotle has now introduced forms of lack of control relating to various kinds of things that are not necessary, but that are choiceworthy in themselves. He adds that even though people suffering from such forms of lack of control can correctly be said to lack control over this or that, they are not said to lack control without qualification. He then seems to offer a comparison between the different uses of the term 'lacking control' and the different meanings of the word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ* ('HUMAN'), when that word is employed to denote any member of the human species and when it is used as the name of *Anthropos*, the Olympic boxing champion of the year 456 BC.<sup>20</sup> Now, it is not immediately clear how we are meant to construe the comparison, let alone how it is supposed to illuminate the uses of the term 'lacking control'. Aristotle notes that the common account of *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ*, which plainly corresponds to one meaning of the word, is a little different from the specific or private account, which corresponds to the other meaning. The idea is presumably that the common account is the account shared by all members of the human species, whereas the account private to *Anthropos* contains in addition some specification that singles him out—say, 'oldest son of So-and-So'.<sup>21</sup> The word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ* can be used narrowly or privately, so as uniquely to pick out *Anthropos*, and broadly, so as to pick out all human beings. The comparison suggests, then, that Aristotle thinks there is likewise a narrow or private use of the term 'lacking control', underwritten by a specific account of lack of control without qualification, and a broad or generic use, with a corresponding account of what it is to lack control in general.<sup>22</sup> *Anthropos*, to whom the word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ* can correctly be applied twice over, would then be analogous to the person who lacks control without qualification, to whom the term 'lacking control' applies both in its specific and in its generic use.

It has been objected that Aristotle seems to be committed to a rather different conception of the uses of the term 'lacking control' from what the comparison may suggest.<sup>23</sup> His settled view seems to be that there is on the one hand the proper use of the term, and on the other hand a transferred use, or a number of such uses, based on resemblance, in which the term gets transferred from its proper domain to some other domain.<sup>24</sup> On this conception, it is precisely not the case that the term 'lacking control' applies in both of its uses to people suffering from lack of control without qualification. It applies to such people only in its proper use, and obviously not in its transferred use (except by coincidence). I think that this objection has considerable force, and I will return to it in Section 3.

<sup>20</sup> As we know from a papyrus found at Oxyrhynchus in the late nineteenth century: Grenfell and Hunt, *Classical Review*, 13 (1899), 290–1.

<sup>21</sup> Similarly Gauthier and Jolif, *ad loc.*  
<sup>22</sup> This is Broadie's interpretation (*Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, ad loc.*), to which the present paragraph is indebted: "Lack of self-control" said without qualification can function as a generic term covering the various sorts of lack of self-control, but its meaning is different when it is used as the "proper name" of lack of self-control proper" (p. 394).

<sup>23</sup> Stewart *ad loc.*: "in the expression *ἀκρατής κέρδους*, the proper meaning of the term *ἀκρατής* is metaphorically extended, as the proper meaning of *ἄνθρωπος* (= human being) is extended in the expression "wild man of the woods" (= ape)."

<sup>24</sup> Note in particular *NE VII. 5, 1149<sup>a</sup>21–4.*

It should, however, be pointed out that Aristotle does seem to employ the term 'lacking control', said without qualification, in a broad or generic use in which it applies both to people who suffer from lack of control without qualification and to people who lack control over anger, honour, profit, and the like. For in making our chapter's introductory remark, that it is clear that lack of control and related dispositions are about pleasures and pains, Aristotle is employing the term broadly or generically, so that it does apply to everyone who suffers from any form of lack of control, plain as well as qualified. But there is a question, to which I will return in a short while, as to whether the generic use of the term 'lacking control', said without qualification, will be retained once the various uses and the underlying natures or dispositions have been properly sorted out.

As we have seen, Aristotle has by now stated the view that we do not say about people who lack control over such things as property, honour, or anger that they lack control without adding a suitable qualification, which specifies that over which we take the person in question to lack control. This, I take it, is a view about the actual use made of the relevant semi-technical terminology by those people who in fact make use of it:<sup>25</sup> trivial mistakes aside, no such person (and so no one at all) would describe a person who lacks control over property, honour, anger, or the like simply by saying that he or she is an *ἀκρατής*. Having stated that view, Aristotle offers a consideration that he takes to indicate, or corroborate, its correctness:

Lack of control is censured not only as a fault (*ἀμαρτία*), but also in a way as badness (*κακία τις*), either without qualification or in terms of some particular sort of badness, whereas none of the types just mentioned is censured in this way. (1148<sup>b</sup>2–4)

This consideration seems to me highly effective. It supports Aristotle's view by shedding light on why, trivial mistakes aside, no one does, or indeed ever would, say about a person who lacks control over, say, anger, simply that he or she lacks control. It is at least in part<sup>26</sup> because lack of control is censured (again, by all parties involved), and censured severely, and none of the analogous dispositions in relation to the various optional sources of pleasure is censured in this way. As we might say, Aristotle is calling attention to the fiercely negative connotation of the words *ἀκρασία* and *ἀκρατής*, when these are used absolutely.

It remains to isolate plain lack of control. Somewhat surprisingly and, as it turns out, problematically, Aristotle does not carry out this task simply by appealing to the various necessary sources of pleasure and by locating unqualified lack of control in weakness in relation to those. Rather, he says (in effect) that those people are said to lack control without qualification who go against decision and

<sup>25</sup> In the Classical period, the word *ἀκρασία* and related words are not common in ordinary prose, and certainly not in poetry. They do not occur much outside Plato, Xenophon, Isocrates, and Aristotle (and I have found only three occurrences in Isocrates).

<sup>26</sup> This is not, I think, the whole story: Xenophon's *Memorabilia* suggest that absolute uses of *ἀκρασία* words specifically denote cases of lack of control over bodily pleasures and their sources, or over bodily pains and what may cause them.

thought in going to excess in pursuing the relevant pleasures, and in avoiding certain painful things, namely 'hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and all the painful things to do with touch and taste' (1148<sup>a</sup>4–9). Aristotle repeatedly says that plain lack of control shares its proper domain with temperance and self-indulgence. This was asserted already in *NE* VII. 3 (1146<sup>b</sup>19–20). It clearly is in Aristotle's mind when he says, at the beginning of Version A's distinction among the sources of pleasure, that the necessary things are those kinds of bodily things that were assigned to self-indulgence and temperance. And it is restated in what follows almost immediately, in one of the two supplementary remarks that conclude Version A:

And for this reason we place in the same class the person who lacks control and the self-indulgent person (and also the person who has control and the temperate person), but none of these other people. This is because the former are in a way about the same pleasures and pains. People of these types (*sc.* those who lack control and those who are self-indulgent)<sup>27</sup> are about the same things, but not in the same way. Rather, people of the one type decide on these things, people of the other type do not. (1148<sup>a</sup>13–17)

Given the doctrine that plain lack of control and self-indulgence share the same domain, however, a problem of interpretation arises from Aristotle's evident acceptance of the view that the person who suffers from plain lack of control goes to excess both in pursuing certain pleasant things and in avoiding 'hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and all the painful things to do with touch and taste'.<sup>28</sup> At any rate, a problem arises for the overall coherence of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The problem is that the relevant discussion in *NE* III. 10–12 presents a significantly narrower account of the proper domain of self-indulgence than Version A seems to envisage.<sup>29</sup> In *NE* III. 10, Aristotle ties self-indulgence tightly to the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex, emphasizing the way the self-indulgent person enjoys these activities primarily through the sense of touch (1118<sup>a</sup>29–32). Yet he insists that self-indulgence does not concern all kinds of tactile pleasures, specifically ruling out pleasures produced in gymnasias through rubbing and warming: 'For the touching that is characteristic of the self-indulgent person has to do not with the whole body but only with certain parts of it' (*NE* III. 10, 1118<sup>b</sup>6–8). *NE* III. 11 adds some remarks about how self-indulgence and temperance relate to pain. As far as pains are concerned, people are self-indulgent 'in virtue of being pained more than one should be at not getting the pleasant things in question' (1118<sup>b</sup>30–2). The pain they suffer, Aristotle adds, is produced by the pleasure that they take in the relevant pleasant things, which

<sup>27</sup> With Irwin and against Brodie and Rowe I take the comparison at 1148<sup>a</sup>16–17 to be exclusively between those who lack control and the self-indulgent. Cf. *NE* VII. 3, 1146<sup>b</sup>22–5; VII. 9, 1152<sup>a</sup>4–6. *καὶ ἐγκρατῆ καὶ σώφρονα* at 1148<sup>a</sup>14 is, I think, best taken as a parenthesis.

<sup>28</sup> That Aristotle is meaning to endorse this view is not, I think, negotiable.

<sup>29</sup> This problem was pointed out by Cook Wilson. Gauthier and Jolif, *ad loc.*, think that it is surmountable, in that one need not abandon *NE* III. 10–11's account of self-indulgence and its proper domain in order to accommodate the pains that Version A includes in the domain of plain lack of control. This seems to me untenable. (*Contra* Cooper, 'Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value', 87–8 n. 12.)

are doubtless meant to be precisely those kinds of things that form the proper domain of self-indulgence as well as of temperance: namely, eating, drinking, and having sex. According to the discussion of temperance and self-indulgence in *NE* III. 10–12, then, their proper domain are the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex, and such pains or discomforts as may result from not attaining pleasures of these particular kinds. This of course leaves no room for including in the proper domain of self-indulgence pains to do specifically with heat and cold, or any other kind of pain or discomfort not associated with appetites for food, drink, or sex.

It is worth pointing out, on the other hand, that the discussion of temperance and self-indulgence in *EE* III. 2 is significantly less restrictive about their proper domain than its counterpart in the *NE*. In discussing the question what kinds of pleasure self-indulgence and temperance are about, *EE* III. 2 does mention eating, drinking, and having sex, and no other activities. But Aristotle also says in that chapter that self-indulgence is about the objects of taste and touch, adding that these are the only kinds of things that give pleasure and pain to the non-human animals (1230<sup>b</sup>36–8). Furthermore, the discussion of temperance and self-indulgence in *EE* III. 2 offers a less determinate conception of how self-indulgence relates specifically to pain than the longer discussion of the topic in *NE* III. 10–12.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle's strong emphasis in the *Eudemian Ethics* on the kinship of perspective between self-indulgent characters and non-human animals,<sup>31</sup> together with the reference to animal pain, coheres well with the idea that self-indulgence is about not only the kinds of pleasure that humans share with the other animals, but also the shared kinds of pain. And this would certainly include pains involved in the experience of extremes in heat and cold.<sup>32</sup>

We are now ready to turn to Version B. Aristotle begins with a threefold classification among the objects or sources of appetites and pleasures: things

<sup>30</sup> According to *EE* III. 2, self-indulgence and temperance are about certain pleasures and pains (1230<sup>b</sup>9–10; cf. 1230<sup>b</sup>37–8 and 1231<sup>a</sup>31–4). Even though the *EE* discussion talks for the most part about the self-indulgent person's excessive disposition, and the temperate person's proper disposition, in relation only to certain pleasures, rather than in relation to certain pleasures and pains, it does not say, as its *NE* counterpart does right away (at 1117<sup>b</sup>24–6), that self-indulgence and temperance are in the first place about certain kinds of pleasure and only derivatively about certain kinds of pain; note that, in the *NE*, Aristotle goes on to say that self-indulgence is on account of pleasure, contrasting it with cowardice, which is on account of pain (*NE* III. 12, 1119<sup>a</sup>20–2). (And so in the *Eudemian* discussion talk only of pleasures of the relevant kind, unlike in the *NE* discussion, might well be intended as shorthand for the idea of pleasures and pains of the relevant kind.) In this regard, Version A is much like *EE* III. 2: it too treats unqualified lack of control, and by implication self-indulgence and temperance, as being about pleasures and pains of the relevant kinds (1148<sup>a</sup>4–11; note also 1148<sup>a</sup>15 and 1148<sup>b</sup>19, 22). Version B's complete silence about pains of any kind, by contrast, makes good sense against the background of the *Nicomachean* discussion of temperance and self-indulgence, but would be a bit of a surprise in connection specifically with *EE* III. 2.

<sup>31</sup> All of 1230<sup>b</sup>36–1231<sup>a</sup>18 is relevant.

<sup>32</sup> Even fish, after all, stay away from extremes of cold and heat (*φειρόντες τὰς ὑπερβολὰς τοῦ ψύχους καὶ τῆς ἀέρας*, *Hist. an.* VIII. 13, 598<sup>a</sup>2). Cf. 1148<sup>a</sup>6–8: *φειῖον* (*sc.* τὰς ὑπερβολὰς) [...] ἀέρας καὶ ψύχους.



that are generically fine and worth seriously caring about, as well as naturally choiceworthy; things that are the opposite of those; and intermediates.<sup>33</sup> He illustrates the first sort of sources of pleasure by offering as examples property (*χρήματα*),<sup>34</sup> profit (*κέρδος*),<sup>35</sup> victory, and honour. This first sort plainly corresponds to Version A's category of sources of pleasure that are not necessary, but choiceworthy in themselves. We should note, however, that Aristotle seems to think of the items in question—including property and profit—not only as naturally choiceworthy, but also as generically fine and worth seriously caring about (*τῶ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων*).<sup>36</sup> It is not clear what exactly he has in mind in so characterizing these things, but it does seem possible to construct from Aristotelian resources an account that is neither implausible nor unattractive.

The discussion of wealth acquisition (*χρηματισμός*) in *Politics* I. 8–11 may offer an important clue. Aristotle there claims that there are natural and commendable forms of both wealth and wealth acquisition. Both the natural form of wealth and the natural form of wealth acquisition, he holds, have a proper limit and goal, and this is the ongoing provision of such goods as are required for, and conducive to, civilized human living in the context of a household. What he recognizes as the natural form of wealth acquisition is identified not only in terms of its contribution to securing and sustaining a due measure of material well-being for a given household, but also in terms of exploiting appropriate sources of wealth, primarily crops, fruit, and domestic animals.<sup>37</sup> This form of wealth acquisition, he claims, is necessary, presumably for civilized human living; and he adds,

<sup>33</sup> It should be clear, at any rate on reflection, that the list of examples at 1148<sup>a</sup>25–6 is meant to illustrate things that are naturally choiceworthy. (This, incidentally, is how the examples are understood by the anonymous Greek commentator: *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 20, ed. G. Heylbut, 425, 27–30). For honour is included at 1148<sup>a</sup>29–31 among things that are naturally fine and good, and at 1148<sup>a</sup>26–7 the items listed (including honour) are grouped together as things of one kind and distinguished from intermediates. Bywater's punctuation cannot, then, be right. I propose to punctuate as follows: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι τῶ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων τῶν γὰρ ἡδέων ἕνα φύσει αἰρετὰ (τὰ δ' ἐναντία τούτων, τὰ δὲ μεταξύ), οἷον χρήματα καὶ κέρδος καὶ νίκη καὶ τιμὴ. etc. (I agree with Gauthier and Jolif, *ad loc.*, that the back reference at 1148<sup>a</sup>25 is best regarded as an editor's insertion.)

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *NE* IV. 1, 1119<sup>b</sup>26–7: 'by property (*χρήματα*) we mean anything whose worth is measured by money (*νομίσματα*)'.

<sup>35</sup> There are derogatory uses of the term *κέρδος* (and related words such as *κερδαίνω*). For example, Aristotle uses the word *κέρδος* to pick out the excessive kind of act that lies at one extreme of the range whose mean is 'the just' (*EE* II. 3, 1221<sup>a</sup>4). It is important to note, however, that the word can also be used neutrally, so as to mean simply 'profit', 'gain', or the like. Examples of this neutral use include *EE* VII. 10, 1142<sup>b</sup>21; *NE* IV. 1, 1122<sup>a</sup>11–12; VIII. 14, 1163<sup>b</sup>1–5; *Pol.* II. 11, 1273<sup>b</sup>3–4; V. 2, 1302<sup>a</sup>31–2.

<sup>36</sup> It may be that Aristotle wrote, not αἱ μὲν εἰσι τῶ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων, but αἱ μὲν εἰσι τῶν τῶ γένει, etc., as Rasso conjectured (according to Susenihl's Teubner edition). In that case, Aristotle may only be claiming that some appetites and pleasures are generically fine and worth seriously caring about: namely, those that are directed at or belong to things that are naturally choiceworthy. (I thank Jennifer Whiting and Ben Morison for discussion concerning this point.) I think, however, that the text transmitted by all our manuscripts makes good sense, and so I propose to accept it as it stands.

<sup>37</sup> *Pol.* I. 10, 1258<sup>a</sup>37–8. Note also *Pol.* I. 11, 1258<sup>a</sup>9–39.

crucially for our purposes, that it is praised.<sup>38</sup> Effective wealth acquisition requires experience of

what sorts of horses, cattle, sheep, and similarly other animals yield the most profit (*λιωτελέστατα*) in different places and conditions; for one needs practical experience of which breeds are by comparison with one another the most profitable, and which breeds yield the most profit in which places, as different ones thrive in different places. (*Pol.* I. 11, 1258<sup>b</sup>12–17, trans. C.D.C. Reeve)

Together with the cultivation of crops and fruit, and with bee-keeping, the rearing of various other creatures such as fish, breeding horses, cattle, sheep, and the like counts as a part of 'the primary and most appropriate kind of wealth acquisition' (1258<sup>b</sup>20–1).

The natural forms of wealth and wealth acquisition contrast with misdirected and unnatural forms, which are characterized in terms of being disconnected from the limiting goal of supplying a household with the goods needed for civilized living, and also in terms of inappropriate sources of profit: namely, commerce and usury. Wealth acquisition based on commercial exchange of goods, Aristotle says, is justly censured (1258<sup>a</sup>40–<sup>b</sup>1); and wealth acquisition by usury is most reasonably detested, and is most of all contrary to nature (1258<sup>b</sup>2–8). The important thing to notice for our purposes is that Aristotle clearly thinks of what he takes to be the commendable forms of wealth acquisition as being the primary and natural ones, and of the other ones as perverted and unnatural ones. His view then seems to be that, so to speak, in the natural order of things, wealth and wealth acquisition are in their own right fine and worthwhile things. After all, they are rational and practically intelligent ways of ensuring that a given household is

<sup>38</sup> *Pol.* I. 10, 1258<sup>a</sup>40: καὶ ταύτης μὲν ἀναγκαίας καὶ ἐπανομιλῆς. For the connection in Aristotle's mind between fineness and praise, see *Rh.* I. 9, 1366<sup>a</sup>33–4, where one way in which the fine is defined is as whatever is such as to be praised, being choiceworthy in its own right. Cf. *NE* IV. 1, 1120<sup>a</sup>4–21, where Aristotle explains why generosity is primarily to do with giving as one should, rather than with taking from the right sources or with not taking from the wrong sources. Proper giving, he there says among other things, is praised more than abstaining from improper taking (1120<sup>a</sup>15–16), and he adds that people are not praised very much for (proper) taking, either (οἱ δὲ λαμβάνοντες οὐδ' ἐπανομιλῆν πάντων, 1120<sup>a</sup>21). (*Contra* Broadie and Rowe, Aristotle is not here saying that 'those who do take are not even praised at all'. The literal meaning yielded by negations of πάντων is always something like 'not altogether', 'not very much', or 'not exactly'. See Kühner and Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der Griechischen Sprache, Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre* (Hannover, 1904), 180, Anmerkung 3. Such expressions readily lend themselves to liotes, but given *Pol.* I. 10, 1258<sup>a</sup>40—and also *NE* IV. 1, 1120<sup>b</sup>32: ἐπεὶ γὰρ τῇ ἐπιουσίᾳ δόξα ἢ τοιαύτη λήθη—there is strong reason not to suppose that the present sentence is a case of that.) Aristotle is plainly implying that people are praised, albeit not very much, for generating income from appropriate sources. These, he makes clear a little later, are one's own possessions (1120<sup>b</sup>34–<sup>b</sup>1): what he has in mind are no doubt one's own livestock and the crops and fruit cultivated on one's land. The generous person, he adds, will generate income from his possessions not as something fine, but as something necessary, so that he is in a position to give (1120<sup>b</sup>1–2). This latter claim is surely compatible with there being some degree of fineness in the appropriate generation of income: since appropriate giving is clearly so much finer than appropriate taking, it makes perfectly good sense that the generous person generates income as something necessary rather than as something fine, even if appropriate taking is in itself not without some measure of fineness.

supplied on an ongoing basis with the various goods that its members need for civilized human living.

If this is along the right lines, then we seem to be in a position to make good sense of the inclusion, at the beginning of Version B, of property and profit<sup>39</sup> in the first sort of sources of pleasure: things that are generically fine and worth seriously caring about, since they are naturally choiceworthy, or naturally choiceworthy on their own account (*φύσει αἰρετά*, 1148<sup>a</sup>24, amplified at 1148<sup>b</sup>3 as *φύσει τῶν αἰρετῶν ... δι' αὐτό*).

Version A's necessary sources of pleasure now seem to be assigned to the intermediate category. We should note that in assigning them to this category—assuming that this is what he is doing—Aristotle is taking the view that the things or activities in question are not generically fine or worth seriously caring about, and also that they are not naturally choiceworthy, or naturally choiceworthy on their own account. As we will see in what follows, moreover, his subsequent argument will importantly depend on this view. In Section 3 I will offer a relatively detailed account of what Aristotle may have in mind in classifying Version A's necessary sources of pleasure in the way he does in Version B. For now, I only want to suggest, as a first approximation, that he is thinking of the pleasant things in question—those that temperance and self-indulgence are about: namely, eating, drinking, and having sex—simply as activities of certain kinds, considered in their own right rather than as they relate to the appropriate kinds of bodily needs; and that he takes the view that considered in this way—namely, simply in their own right as activities of certain kinds—they are of little or no value.

Against the background of Version B's threefold classification among the objects of appetite and pleasure, Aristotle proceeds to distinguish between various appetitive forms of qualified lack of control on the one hand and plain lack of control on the other.<sup>40</sup> In a striking departure from Version A, lack of control over anger is not now introduced on the basis of a distinction among the sources of pleasure. Rather, it is added to the various forms of lack of control over appetites only at the end of the chapter, setting the scene for the comparison between lack of control over appetitive desires and lack of control over anger that will be made

<sup>39</sup> One might find it implausible that Aristotle could be using the word *κέρδος* to pick out something that he considers generically fine and worth seriously caring about, given that he employs this word, and related words, pejoratively to denote excessive and illegitimate gain. There are, however, parallels for a non-pejorative use of the word (see n. 35 above). Moreover, Aristotle does seem to be at pains to accommodate and explain the forms of expression noted in *NE VII. 2*'s list of *λεγόμενα*, that people are said to lack control over anger, honour, and profit, and those expressions did include the word *κέρδος*; note the way lack of control over anger, honour, and profit are picked up at the end of our chapter, again to the effect that these are things that actually are said.

<sup>40</sup> Throughout Version B, Aristotle writes of plain lack of control—or lack of control, speaking without qualification—simply as *ἀκρασία* (1148<sup>b</sup>5, <sup>b</sup>11), rather than as *ἡ ἀπλή ἀκρασία* (as at VII. 5, 1149<sup>a</sup>2), *ἀπλῶς ἀκρασία* (VII. 6, 1149<sup>b</sup>19), or the like. However, in the context (going back to the chapter's opening question) it seems reasonable to assume that Aristotle is taking it as understood that in writing simply of *ἀκρασία*, he has in mind lack of control, speaking without qualification. For the sake of clarity, I will in my own discussion (though not, of course, in quoting Aristotle) employ what I take to be the appropriate amplifications.

in *NE VII. 6*. People are censured, Aristotle points out, for going to excess both in relation to generically fine sources of pleasure and in relation to intermediates. The former case is illustrated by excessive pursuit of honour, and by acts that express an excessive view of the value of one's children or parents. The excesses of Niobe and Satyros that Aristotle refers to need not be thought of as examples of lack of control of any variety. What he has in mind at this stage are acts that go against correct reason, but not necessarily acts that go against correct reason as present in the agent.<sup>41</sup> Thus, these are acts that at least in part spring from appetitive desire, but they may or may not involve being defeated by appetitive desire.

About the kinds of things picked out earlier as generically fine and worth seriously caring about, Aristotle goes on, there is no worthlessness (*μοχθηρία*),<sup>42</sup> precisely because these things are naturally choiceworthy on their own account. All of the things in question are generically fine and worth seriously caring about, and no one is worthless. Aristotle seems to think, merely in virtue of going to excess in valuing and pursuing *such* things. If this is what he has in mind, as it seems to be, he must think that bad dispositions that are related to property and honour such as avarice, shabbiness, (excessive) love of honour, and conceitedness are not forms of worthlessness, even though they are, of course, forms of badness. In fact, a number of passages in Aristotle's discussions of various bad character dispositions make clear that he is fully prepared to acknowledge differences in degree of gravity among the various vices.<sup>43</sup> Profligacy, for instance, is not, he thinks, the mark of a worthless (*μοχθηρός*) or ignoble person, but of a fool. Excessive love of property may lead to deficient giving, as well as to excessive taking. When it comes to excessive taking, however, Aristotle distinguishes between avarice, which concerns objects of relatively little value, and wrongful taking on a large scale, which is reproached more severely and in stronger terms:

Those who take on a large scale, and not from the sources one should, nor what one should—e.g., tyrants when they sack cities and plunder sanctuaries—we don't call these avaricious, but rather vicious (*πονηρός*), impious, and unjust. (*NE IV. 1*, 1122<sup>a</sup>3–7)

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle is meaning to illustrate cases of going against reason (*ὅσοι μὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον ἢ κρατοῦνται ἢ διακκοῦσι*)—by which, I assume, he means correct reason. This need not involve going against correct reason as present within one (contrast 1147<sup>b</sup>31–2). Other passages in which the expressions *παρὰ τὸν λόγον* and *παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον* are used to signify transgressions against correct reason, rather than correct reason as present within one, are *EE II. 3*, 1221<sup>a</sup>17; *EE III. 4*, 1232<sup>b</sup>1; *NE VII. 8*, 1151<sup>a</sup>10–14.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle evidently uses the word *μοχθηρία* in more ways than one. He sometimes uses it without much colour, as a mere synonym for *κακία*, so that it can contrast with *ἀρετή*. See e.g. *NE V. 1*, 1129<sup>b</sup>19–25. He also uses it as an especially severe term of condemnation, so that, in this use, someone can suffer from some *κακία* without suffering from *μοχθηρία*. This use is in evidence at *NE IV. 1*, 1121<sup>a</sup>25–7. In a passage that I will suggest is closely connected to Version B, *NE X. 5*, 1175<sup>b</sup>24–9, *μοχθηρός* contrasts with *ἐπιεικής*.

<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting that all the relevant passages occur in *NE III* and *IV*, and are thus specifically Nicomachean. (To the passages discussed in what follows, add *NE III. 12*, 1119<sup>a</sup>20–7.) Within a purely Eudemian framework, the idea of a form of *κακία* that is not at the same time, and thereby, a form of *μοχθηρία* would be quite mysterious.

Shabbiness and vulgarity, which concern large-scale expenditures, are, he insists, forms of badness, but he allows that 'they do not bring reproaches, since they do no harm to one's neighbours and are not too disgraceful (*μήτε λάν ἀσχήμονες*)' (NE IV. 2, 1123<sup>a</sup>31–3). We have good reason, then, to take it to be Aristotle's view that excessive dispositions in relation to things that are generically fine are never, by themselves, forms of worthlessness, because they embody ways of concerning oneself with things that are in their own right such as to deserve being taken seriously as objects of concern and appreciation.

Likewise, Aristotle continues, lack of control—by which, I assume, he means unqualified lack of control—does not relate to *such* things: 'For lack of control is not only to be avoided but is also worthy of censure (*ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ψεκτῶν*)' (1148<sup>b</sup>5–6). Aristotle has noted already that people *are* censured for certain excesses in relation to both intermediates and generically fine sources of pleasure (1148<sup>b</sup>26–8). These excesses would seem to include emotions, appetites, and love beyond due measure. Furthermore, Aristotle takes the view that excesses in relation to generically fine sources of pleasure are base, to be avoided, and flaws (1148<sup>b</sup>4–5).<sup>44</sup> There are a number of ways of giving Aristotle what the argument needs, which is a clear contrast between plain lack of control and lack of control over generically fine sources of pleasure. Aristotle may be meaning to say that while people are censured for excessive acts that express lack of control over generically fine sources of pleasure,<sup>45</sup> people are not censured, or anyhow not appropriately so, merely for having the dispositions of character from which such excessive acts tend to flow. The contrast would then be that while the various forms of lack of control over generically fine things are not censured simply in virtue of being the dispositions they are, plain lack of control is censured in this way: simply in virtue of being the disposition that it is.

Aristotle may also be relying on an implicit distinction between censuring in some sort of way and censuring as genuinely bad, or as close enough to genuine badness or even worthlessness.<sup>46</sup> The contrast would then be that while lack of control over such goods as honour and property do, or may well, deserve censure inasmuch as they are in their own right significant flaws of character, and certainly

<sup>44</sup> I am translating from Susemihl's text, which runs as follows: *φαιδία δὲ καὶ φουκταὶ καὶ ἀμαρτήματα αὐτῶν εἰσὶν αἱ ὑπερβολαί*. The words *καὶ ἀμαρτήματα* are apparently found in two of the four principal manuscripts (K<sup>b</sup> and M<sup>b</sup>), and it is hard to see how they got there if they were not in the common archetype. They also seem to me to make Aristotle's train of thought somewhat clearer. Lack of control, speaking without qualification, is censured, not in the attenuated way in which one censures a mere flaw, but in the severe and full-blooded way that is appropriate in the face of genuine worthlessness, or a close approximation to that.

<sup>45</sup> On this view, the idea expressed at 1148<sup>b</sup>26–8 is that with regard to generically fine things as well as to intermediates, people *are* censured for being affected, forming appetites, and loving in certain ways: namely, in such ways as to be driven by these affective states into acting in excess of what is right. Translate: 'with regard to all of these kinds of things and to intermediates, people are censured for being affected (etc.) in a certain way, i.e. for going to excess'.

<sup>46</sup> Stewart helpfully suggests (*ad loc.*) that 'whereas the verb *ψέγονται* may be used popularly and vaguely, *τῶν ψεκτῶν*—"the class of τὰ ψεκτὰ"—is a technical expression, and marks that severe censure which we pass on *ὑπερβολαί* in *σοματικῶν*.'

inasmuch as they involve tendencies to act in seriously objectionable ways, none of *these* forms of lack of control deserves to be censured in the severe and full-blooded way that plain lack of control does.

On any reading, the key point of Aristotle's argument is that lack of control over honour, property, and the like are protected from being even in the general neighbourhood of worthlessness by being related to, and embodying ways of strongly caring about, things that are on their own account such as to deserve being treated as objects of serious concern and appreciation. By contrast, lack of control over those things that self-indulgence relates to is in the general neighbourhood of worthlessness, because it relates to, and embodies ways of strongly and excessively caring about, things that are not on their own account such as to be worth seriously caring about. Aristotle closes his argument with the claim that since lack of control, speaking without qualification, is worthy of censure (presumably in some appropriately strict sense), it cannot be about generically fine sources of pleasure. This is obviously not a formally complete argument, but it can be completed by adding what seems to me a reasonable and intuitive assumption, which is that for a disposition of character to be worthy of censure in the relevant sense, it must be some form or other of outright badness or, failing that—as in the case of any form of lack of control—it must belong in the neighbourhood of some form or other of worthlessness. In the latter case, in other words, it must be in the neighbourhood of a form of badness that is particularly disgraceful or repugnant (or whatever). Once some such assumption is supplied, Aristotle has a valid and, I think, interesting and effective argument to the conclusion that none of the forms of lack of control over appetites for generically fine sources of pleasure can correctly be referred to as lack of control, speaking without qualification.

- (1) None of the forms of lack of control over appetites for generically fine sources of pleasure is in the neighbourhood of worthlessness.
- (2) Lack of control, speaking without qualification, is a disposition of character that is worthy of censure (in the strict sense).
- (3) For a disposition of character to be worthy of censure (in the strict sense), it must be a form of badness or belong into the neighbourhood of worthlessness.
- (4) None of the forms of lack of control is a form of badness.

So: None of the forms of lack of control over appetites for generically fine sources of pleasure is lack of control, speaking without qualification.

The term 'lack of control', Aristotle continues, is applied to these other dispositions, on account of their resemblance to plain lack of control, but it is applied with an addition or qualification. He compares this to the way people would say about a suitable individual that he is a bad doctor or a bad actor, but would not say without qualification or addition that he is bad, plainly because to ascribe badness to a person, without any qualification or addition, is to characterize him or her as a bad person rather than just as a bad doctor or actor. Aristotle further develops the comparison by noting that neither of

these qualified forms of badness—badness with regard to the art of medicine or with regard to acting—simply is badness,<sup>47</sup> though they resemble it by being analogous. Presumably the idea is that the qualified forms of badness stand to doctors and actors as unqualified badness stands to human beings, or something along those lines. Likewise, we may fill in Aristotle's comparison, lack of control over property, honour, and the like are not cases of lack of control, speaking without qualification, though they resemble it by being analogous. They stand to the various generically fine sources of pleasure the way unqualified lack of control stands to the things that constitute the proper domain of temperance and self-indulgence.

Aristotle completes the discussion in two more steps. He identifies what he takes to be the only forms of control and lack of control that qualify as unqualified control and lack of control. These, of course, are control and lack of control over those things that temperance and self-indulgence are about. And he closes by casting a quick glance at lack of control over anger: 'In relation to anger, we use the terms in virtue of resemblance.'<sup>48</sup> This is why we add the qualification that someone lacks control over anger, as with lack of control over honour and profit' (1148<sup>b</sup>12–14).

This completes my attempt to reconstruct the argument of Version B. I will now make some comparative remarks about the chapter's two versions of a distinction between plain and qualified lack of control. Finally, I will close by commenting on the conception of plain and qualified lack of control that seems to me to emerge from the chapter.

### 3. A revised account?

Although Versions A and B express roughly the same train of thought, there are a number of noteworthy differences between the two. Taken together, and considered in the overall context of Aristotle's ethical writings, these differences seem to me to suggest rather forcefully that Version B was meant to supersede Version A, so as to offer a significantly revised account of the distinction between plain and qualified lack of control. Moreover, I will hold that Version B shows clear signs of a number of interrelated philosophical developments that seem distinctive of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, whereas Version A shows no such signs and is actually in conflict with one of these developments. The upshot will be that Version B is very probably a revised exposition, meant for study specifically in the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The first difference one notices is that between the two versions' distinctions among the sources of pleasure. Version B's threefold distinction is obviously more

<sup>47</sup> Again, what he says literally is just that none of these qualified forms of badness is badness, and, again, I assume that what he has in mind is that none of them simply is badness, or badness without qualification.

<sup>48</sup> Like Irwin and Broadie and Rowe, I am adopting the punctuation suggested by Gauthier and Jolif.

comprehensive, and it seems already to look forward to, and to be designed so as explicitly to make room for, the sorts of depraved and repugnant appetites and pleasures that Aristotle will turn to in the next chapter.

Secondly, Version B handles lack of control over anger rather differently from Version A, and in a way that seems considerably more adept, especially given the context of NE VII. 1–10. As we saw, Version A introduces lack of control over anger in terms of going to excess in relation to sources of pleasure that are not necessary, but that are good and choiceworthy in themselves. It is not only that Version A gives commentators trouble by failing to make explicit what kind of good lack of control over anger is supposed to relate to. More seriously, Version A lumps together lack of control over anger with the very different dispositions that are the various appetitive forms of qualified lack of control, thereby creating the wholly mistaken, and in fact bizarre and ludicrous, impression that lack of control over anger consists in a tendency to be irresistibly attracted to the pleasure of taking revenge.<sup>49</sup>

Version B, by contrast, introduces lack of control over anger separately from the appetitive forms of qualified lack of control, limiting itself for the time being to the comment that lack of control over anger is spoken of the way it is in virtue of resemblance, where the thought is, presumably, that it too resembles lack of control, speaking without qualification. This remark then sets the scene for NE VII. 6's comparison between lack of control over anger and lack of control over the appetites in general, which includes, but is not limited to, plain lack of control. In that chapter, Aristotle defends the claim that appetitive lack of control in general is more disgraceful than lack of control over anger. The chapter contains a detailed and fascinating characterization of lack of control over anger. It can also be seen as completing Aristotle's argument for the view that plain lack of control is exclusively about certain bodily pleasures (note NE VII. 6, 1149<sup>b</sup>25–6). For if lack of control over property, honour, and the like are not forms of lack of control, speaking without qualification, because they are not worthy of censure, or at any rate not in the severe way that lack of control is, then it follows *a fortiori* that lack of control over anger is not, either. This is because lack of control over anger turns out to be less disgraceful, and hence closer to fineness and less worthy of censure, than even the least objectionable forms of appetitive lack of control, such as lack of control over honour, or over one's attachment to one's children or parents.<sup>50</sup>

A third difference to which I want to draw attention is that while Version A relates plain lack of control not only to pleasures but also to pains of certain kinds, Version B says nothing about pains of any kind. Rather, it distinguishes between

<sup>49</sup> If lack of control over anger were *that*, one would expect people suffering from it rather to look forward to insults and other abuses, since these would provide them with opportunities for indulging their foible for taking revenge. But it is, I hope, clear that this is an absurd picture of what it is to lack control over anger.

<sup>50</sup> I assume that what Aristotle is meaning to establish in NE VII. 6 is that lack of control over anger is less disgraceful than each and any form of lack of control over appetitive desire, chiefly on the grounds that anger is related to reason in a way that no appetite can be.

plain lack of control and various qualified forms on the basis of a distinction among appetites and pleasures in terms of their objects or sources. This coheres extremely well with the ongoing discussion of lack of control and related dispositions in subsequent chapters. In *NE VII. 6*, Aristotle completes his comparison between lack of control over anger and lack of control over the appetites by noting that

it is clear then that lack of control over the appetites is more disgraceful than lack of control over anger, and that control and lack of control are about bodily appetites and pleasures.<sup>51</sup> Among those, though, one must grasp the differences. (*NE VII. 6*, 1149<sup>b</sup>23–7)

It is only in *NE VII. 7* that Aristotle turns to the question of how lack of control and the other relevant dispositions relate to pain. His answer is that control and lack of control relate to the pleasures that primarily constitute the proper domain of self-indulgence and temperance,<sup>52</sup> whereas softness and resistance relate to the relevant pains. While these claims in chapters 6 and 7 of *NE VII* fit in very nicely with Version B's conception of plain lack of control, they must seem at least somewhat problematic from the point of view of Version A's broader conception of plain lack of control, according to which it relates also to certain bodily pains, such as may be involved in being hungry, thirsty, hot, or cold (1148<sup>a</sup>7–9). In addition, Version A's reference to heat and cold generates a proper domain for lack of control, and by implication for self-indulgence, that is clearly incompatible with the relevant discussion in *NE III. 10–12*. Version B removes both problems by omitting the reference to pains or painful things and instead limiting itself to appetites and pleasures.

A fourth significant difference is that Version A's somewhat obscure comparison with Anthropos the Olympic victor is replaced, in Version B, with the clear and well-developed comparison between, on the one hand, qualified and unqualified lack of control and, on the other, badness, speaking with or without qualification or addition. As we saw earlier, Version A fails to make clear how exactly Anthropos is expected to shed light on qualified and unqualified ascriptions of lack of control. According to what I take to be the most plausible interpretation,<sup>53</sup> Aristotle is comparing a narrow and a broad use of the term 'lacking control' to the different meanings of the word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ*, when it is used, first, as the name of Anthropos and, secondly, so as to mean 'human being'. If so, the Anthropos comparison depends on the existence of a broad or generic use of the term 'lacking control'. The idea may be that there is such a use even of 'lacking control' said without qualification. It does seem to be the case, after all, that Aristotle employs the term 'lacking control', said without qualification, so as to cover all the various forms of lack of control. I have argued that he is using the term in this way at the beginning of our chapter. However, it seems to be part of the purpose of our chapter's distinction to justify and implement a tightening on the use of the term

<sup>51</sup> *περὶ ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἡδονῶν ἀσφατακῶς*. Cf. the beginning of Version B: *ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν αἱ μὲν ... τὰ δ' ...*

<sup>52</sup> According to the discussion in *NE III. 10–12*, as we have seen already, self-indulgence and temperance relate in the first place to pleasures of certain kinds; they relate 'less, and not in the same way, to pains' (*NE III. 10*, 1117<sup>b</sup>24–7).

<sup>53</sup> Broadie's, see n. 22 above.

'lacking control', said without qualification or addition. In subsequent chapters, when Aristotle writes 'lack of control' or 'lacking control', he always seems to have in mind plain lack of control.<sup>54</sup>

The idea may also be that there is a generic use of the term, but in that use it is never said without qualification. The generic use is in play, one might think, not only when people are said to lack control over honour or anger, but also when someone is said to lack control over the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex. In this way, then, the term 'lacking control' would apply twice over to those who are plain uncontrolled, the way the word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ* applies twice over to Anthropos the boxing champion. It applies to the plain uncontrolled, both in that they can correctly be said simply to lack control and in that they also can correctly be said to lack control over the pleasures of eating and so forth.

This, however, does not seem to be sufficient to sustain the Anthropos comparison. It is not just that the word *ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΣ* can be applied twice over to Anthropos the boxing champion. It is also that when the word is applied to him in its 'shared' use, it is employed in precisely the same use, or meaning, in which it is employed when it is applied to any other human being. It is far from clear, though, whether Aristotle is prepared to accept that there exists a use of the term 'lacking control' such that one can employ that use both in saying that a person lacks control over, say, the pleasure of eating and in saying that someone else lacks control over, say, anger. What he evidently wishes to make clear in our chapter and the next is that lack of control, properly speaking, relates to those things, and only those things, that self-indulgence and temperance are about. In relation to other things—such as honour and anger—the term 'lack of control' is used in a way that involves transferring it from its own proper domain to some other domain (*κατὰ μεταφορὰν*, *NE VII. 5*, 1149<sup>a</sup>21–4). There is no indication in the text, apart from the Anthropos comparison, that Aristotle is prepared to accept, in addition to the proper and the transferred uses of the term 'lack of control', a generic use that ranges over both the proper and the transferred uses. His view seems rather to be that whenever the term 'lack of control' is used within its proper domain, it is employed in its proper use, and otherwise it is employed in a transferred use. This leaves no room for a generic use that ranges over both the term's proper domain and other domains into which it might be transferred. If so, the Anthropos comparison is seriously problematic in light of how Aristotle seems to think of the uses of the term 'lack of control'.

Version B's counterpart to the Anthropos comparison, on the other hand, is not only clear and well-developed, it also fits very well with what seems to be Aristotle's settled view about the uses of the term 'lack of control'. In comparing unqualified and qualified ascriptions of lack of control to unqualified and qualified ascriptions to people of badness, Aristotle seems to be calling attention precisely to the diversity and heterogeneity present among the various forms of lack of

<sup>54</sup> Rather striking examples are at VII. 5, 1149<sup>a</sup>21; VII. 6, 1149<sup>b</sup>25; VII. 8, 1151<sup>a</sup>11–13; VII. 9, 1151<sup>b</sup>23–5. As we saw earlier, this tightening is implemented right away and without explicit notice in Version B, at 1148<sup>b</sup>5.

control, plain and qualified. For it is one thing to say about someone simply that she is bad, and another thing altogether to say that she is, for instance, a bad actress. If Aristotle wants to reject or discourage the thought that there is some kind of generic unity to the variety of dispositions that are the various forms of lack of control, plain as well as qualified,<sup>55</sup> as it seems clear that he does, then Version B's comparison is eminently well chosen. On the other hand, he cannot, in that case, retain Version A's Anthropos comparison.

The last difference between the two versions that I want to call attention to is somewhat complex, and it will take a while to spell out. To begin with, we should note that Version A merely points out that lack of control, speaking without qualification, is censured 'as in a way badness', whereas lack of control over property, honour, anger, and the like are not censured in this way (1148<sup>b</sup>2–4). Version B, on the other hand, argues for the view that lack of control over such things as property, honour, and victory does not deserve to be censured in the way that lack of control, speaking without qualification, does. It thus contains an argument, and I think an effective and interesting one, that aims to show that the evaluative attitudes merely reported in Version A are at least partly correct: namely, in so far as they concern plain lack of control on the one hand and the appetitive forms of qualified lack of control on the other. The argument, as we saw, crucially relies on the view that plain lack of control relates to sources of pleasure that are neither generically fine nor naturally choice-worthy. Somewhat roughly, the idea is that the relevant kinds of bodily activity are in themselves of little or no value, and that there is something peculiarly unappealing and disgraceful about any person who is disposed to act as they should not, and to fail to act as they should, because of an excessive attachment to, of all things, such activities. Now it seems to me that Aristotle's insistence, in *NE* III. 10, on the self-indulgent person's extremely narrow range of interests is very much of a piece with Version B's concern to show clearly and explicitly what exactly is so peculiarly unappealing about lack of control, speaking without qualification.

Both in *EE* III. 2 and in *NE* III. 10, Aristotle ties self-indulgence closely to the sense of touch. In the Eudemian discussion, he reports that we do not call people self-indulgent for going to excess in relation to pleasures arising through sight, hearing, or smell. 'Such mistakes', he adds, 'we censure without reproach.'<sup>56</sup> We may infer that self-indulgence, by contrast, is censured with reproach. But as in Version A, Aristotle offers no explicit argument aiming to show specifically that self-indulgence deserves to be censured in the particular way that it is. In the Nicomachean discussion, on the other hand, he offers just such an argument, and it is very much along the lines of the more elaborate argument in Version B. 'The sense that is the most widely shared', he writes,

<sup>55</sup> The target here might be Plato, or what may seem a natural extension of what Plato had in mind. One might think, and Plato may have thought, that there is generic unity to lack of control in all its forms, in that all of those forms are ways of lacking control over pleasures or pains of some kind or other, the different forms of lack of control relating to different kinds of pleasures and pains (cf. *Leg.* 934A1–5).

<sup>56</sup> *EE* III. 2, 1231<sup>a</sup>24: ἀνευ ὀνειδῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ψέγομεν ταύτας.

is the one connected with self-indulgence, which would seem justly a matter for reproach (*δόξεν ἄν δακτύλιος ἐπινοεῖσθαι εἶναι*) because it belongs to us not in so far as we are human beings but in so far as we are animals.<sup>57</sup> To delight in *such* things, then, and to love them most of all, is beastly. (*NE* III. 10, 1118<sup>b</sup>1–4)

It is in this context that Aristotle makes the remark that proved problematic when considered together with the proper domain of self-indulgence implied by Version A:

For the touch-related pleasures most appropriate to free men lie outside the sphere of self-indulgence, e.g. the ones in gymnasia produced through rubbing and warming; for the touching that is characteristic of the self-indulgent person has to do not with the whole of the body but only with certain parts of it. (1118<sup>b</sup>4–8)

It is plainly part of Aristotle's objective in the Nicomachean discussion of self-indulgence to show it to be worthy of reproach by focusing attention on the sheer unseemliness of the kinds of pleasure the self-indulgent person is excessively attached to. This requires going beyond what he says in the Eudemian discussion: namely, that self-indulgence is about those kinds of pleasure that arise through the sense of touch. For that will admit relatively refined kinds of pleasure like those of the massage and the body rub.<sup>58</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that the Nicomachean discussion offers a sharpened account of what kinds of pleasure self-indulgence is concerned with: these are the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex, primarily in so far as these activities engage the sense of touch operating through the relevant bodily parts, such as the genitalia and the oesophagus, which gets distended by the consumption of food.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, the Nicomachean discussion further restricts the proper domain of self-indulgence by admitting only such pains as stem from unsatisfied appetites for pleasures of these unseemly kinds. The self-indulgent person is devoted to the pursuit of pleasures of the lowest kinds, and, besides this, he will go to almost any length in order to avoid such pains or discomforts as may arise from failing to satisfy appetites for pleasures of these particular kinds. This gives Aristotle a well-defined and nicely unified conception of the self-indulgent character type, and one, to be sure, that makes it easy to see that self-indulgent individuals amply deserve to be censured and reproached the way they in fact are. On the other hand, he evidently wants to retain the idea that control and

<sup>57</sup> As Aspasius notes *ad loc.*, the passage is somewhat difficult. Self-indulgence would seem to be the subject of *δόξεν ἄν*, i.e. what seems worthy of reproach (surely not, *pace* Irwin, the sense of touch!). But it is hard to see how self-indulgence, being a vice and hence a decision-involving state of character, can be said to belong to us in so far as we are animals rather than humans. Perhaps Aristotle has in mind something like the view that Aspasius rather ingeniously ascribes to him: that self-indulgence is worthy of reproach because it is in so far as we are animals, not in so far as we are humans, that we delight in the pleasures that are productive of it. In effect, we come to be self-indulgent by over-indulging the animal aspect of our nature.

<sup>58</sup> Warming may be brought about by rubbing, as is made clear by *Metaphy.* Z. 7, 1032<sup>b</sup>25–6. (Thanks are due to István Bodnár for the reference.)

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Part. an.* IV. 11, 690<sup>b</sup>34–691<sup>a</sup>2: 'the enjoyment derived from most kinds of food takes place while they are being swallowed and is due to the distention of the oesophagus'.

its lack are 'about the same things' as temperance and self-indulgence. As a result, sharpening the conception of self-indulgence in the way Aristotle does in *NE* III. 10–12 requires giving up on some inherited associations, such as the connection between lack of control and pains or discomforts that do not stem specifically from frustration of the relevant kinds of appetitive desire, such as pain or discomfort caused directly by lack of sleep, or perhaps by excessive heat or cold.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, a truly effective denigration of the things to which the self-indulgent person is excessively attached requires stripping those things of all significant value. This may seem difficult to do, since Aristotle thinks that the things with which the self-indulgent person is concerned are the same in kind as those with which the temperate person, too, is concerned. And those things are pleasurable activities that we, individually or collectively as human beings, must engage in.<sup>61</sup> Now, in the discussion of pleasure that has been handed down to us as part of *NE* VII, Aristotle addresses the question whether the bodily pleasures, those that concern the self-indulgent person, are choiceworthy. His suggestion is that they are good—and so, I assume, choiceworthy—up to a point: namely, so long as no excess is involved. He also speaks, in this connection, of 'the bodily goods' (1154<sup>a</sup>15).<sup>62</sup> In *NE* III. 10, by contrast, he says about the same

pleasurable experiences that they appear to be 'slavish and beastly'<sup>63</sup> (1118<sup>a</sup>25). According to Version B's distinction among the sources of pleasure, moreover, the objects of temperance and self-indulgence turn out not to be 'naturally choiceworthy', and, perhaps more strikingly, they seem not to be included among goods at all (1148<sup>a</sup>31–2).<sup>64</sup> To see what Aristotle has in mind in so classifying those objects, we must, I think, turn to the discussion of pleasure contained in *NE* X. 1–5.

He there, famously, conceives of pleasures as in some way 'supervening' on sensory and intellectual activities, which are more or less good depending on which cognitive capacity is involved and in what condition it is, as well as on the fitness or worthwhileness of the objects that are being grasped (*NE* X. 4, 1174<sup>b</sup>14–31).<sup>65</sup> On that basis, he offers a threefold distinction among activities: some are choiceworthy, others to be avoided, and yet others are neither (*NE* X. 5, 1175<sup>b</sup>24–6). Moreover, he holds that value is passed on from appropriate activities both to pleasures taken in them and to appetites for them.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the value of a given pleasure will depend on the value of the activity that underlies it. That activity, in turn, will derive its value, at least in important part, from the perceptible or intelligible objects that it concerns. The value of those objects, I take it, will crucially involve features such as order, symmetry, determinacy, and the like.<sup>67</sup> So far as perceptibles are concerned, such features may manifest themselves in

<sup>60</sup> In *Xen. Mem.* IV. 5, 9, lack of control is associated with the inability to endure lack of sleep; in *Mem.* I. 5, 1, it is connected with weakness in relation to hard work (*πόνος*).

<sup>61</sup> In both the Eudemian and the Nicomachean discussions of temperance, Aristotle (at least on occasion) thinks of temperance and self-indulgence as being about certain kinds of pleasure in the sense of being about certain kinds of pleasurable activity or experience, rather than specifically and exclusively as being about the kinds of pleasure to be derived from engaging in the relevant kinds of activity. (As was pointed out by G. E. L. Owen, the Greek word *ἡδονή*, like the English word 'pleasure', has two distinct, though closely related, uses; Owen, 'Aristotelian pleasures', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 72 (1971–2), 135–52, 138. These two uses are perhaps best conveyed by examples: 'swimming in the Mediterranean is a great pleasure'; 'I get great pleasure from reading novels'.) In *EE* III. 2, note that Aristotle specifies what temperance and self-indulgence are about variously as pleasures (*ἡδοναί*, 1230<sup>b</sup>9–10, etc.), pleasant things (*ἡδαι*, 1230<sup>b</sup>22–4, 1231<sup>a</sup>36–9), and also as certain forms of perception (1231a19–22). In *NE* III. 10, he says that the kinds of pleasure that temperance and self-indulgence are about are (forms of) touching and tasting: *σύνται δ' εἰσὶν ἀφή καὶ γέστος*, 1118<sup>a</sup>26. Likewise, when Aristotle writes, in *NE* VII. 14, of the pleasures with which the self-indulgent person is concerned (1154<sup>a</sup>8–10), I take him to have in mind the relevant kinds of pleasurable activity. Such activities can equally well be referred to as pleasures, pleasant things, or as things that give pleasure.

<sup>62</sup> Against the background of Version B's implicit but clear assignment of the relevant sources of pleasure to a category intermediate between choiceworthy and good things and their opposites, it may seem surprising to find Aristotle write, in a discussion of pleasure included in the same book, of the things in question (such as having sex) as 'the bodily goods'! I am inclined to think that Version B and *NE* VII. 11–14 were never meant by Aristotle to be parts of a unified argument or discussion. For the *NE* offers its own account of pleasure, at X. 1–5, which neither presupposes nor even mentions the discussion handed down to us as part of *NE* VII. In fact the *NE* X account of pleasure begins with the remark that pleasure and pain should least of all be passed over, given their importance for virtue and happiness (1172<sup>a</sup>16–27). This suggests strongly that pleasure and pain have not yet been discussed. Nor can this remark easily be dismissed as an editor's interpolation, given that it is embedded in a rather elaborate introductory section (1172<sup>a</sup>16–27) which prefaces the *NE* X discussion of pleasure. When we turn to *NE* X. 1–5, we notice that nowhere in that discussion does Aristotle say or imply that

the relevant bodily pleasures, or the underlying activities, are good in any way at all. The discussion of pleasure contained in *NE* VII. 11–14 was probably inserted into the text of the *NE* by an editor, possibly by the person who, at some time between Aristotle's death and the early third century BC, prepared the *NE* for publication in something more or less like its current form. (Given that the *NE*'s ten books are labelled in a way that dropped out of use in the first half of the third century, there is good reason to assume such a relatively early date for its composition; *contra*, for instance, J. Barnes, who thinks that Aristotle's works, more or less as we now have them, were put together in the first century BC by Andronicus—see his 'Life and work', 11, in Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1995). For more on this topic, see M. Burnyeat, 'Aristotelian Revisions: The Case of *De Sensu*', *Apeiron*, 37 (2004), 177–80 n. 3.) It may be worth indicating that I subscribe to the view—which, to my knowledge, was first stated by A. Mansion in 1927, in 'La genèse de l'oeuvre d'Aristote d'après les travaux récents', *Revue Neoscholastique de Philosophie*, 29 (1927), 307–41—that the so-called common books (*NE* V–VII = *EE* IV–VI) are Eudemian in origin, but show signs of later revision. I thus think it was quite appropriate for them to have been included, from at least the early third century BC onward, in the *NE*; except, of course, for *NE* VII. 11–14; those chapters, I take it, were included mistakenly at some time or other, presumably on account of a misguided desire for completeness.

<sup>63</sup> In saying this, he must have in mind pleasures (*ἡδοναί*) in the sense of pleasurable experiences (cf. n. 61 above). For he immediately continues by saying, at 1118<sup>a</sup>26, that the pleasures in question are (forms of) touching and tasting.

<sup>64</sup> The point of *καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα τῶν ἀγαθῶν* etc. at 1148<sup>a</sup>31–2 is, I take it, that people who care more than they should about good things (e.g. their children or parents) avoid the charge of worthlessness. However, people who care more than they should about eating, drinking, and having sex are worthless (the self-indulgent) or nearly so (the uncontrolled). This clearly implies that the objects of temperance and self-indulgence are not to be included among good things.

<sup>65</sup> Note *καλλιστον* at 1174<sup>b</sup>15, and *σπουδαιστατον* at 1174<sup>b</sup>22–3.

<sup>66</sup> *NE* X. 5, 1175<sup>b</sup>28–9; *καὶ γὰρ αἱ ἐπιθημια τῶν μὲν καλῶν ἐπιανεταί, τῶν δ' αἰσχρῶν ψικαταί*.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Metaph.* M. 3, 1078<sup>a</sup>36–<sup>b</sup>1: the chief aspects of the fine are order, symmetry, and determinacy.

the purity or determinately proportional composition of perceptible qualities,<sup>68</sup> as well as in symmetrical or otherwise orderly arrangements.

Furthermore, Aristotle thinks that there are differences in purity among the different modes of cognition, with touch and taste faring predictably badly, especially in comparison with thought (*NE* X. 5, 1175<sup>b</sup>36–1176<sup>a</sup>3). While it is somewhat unclear what exactly Aristotle has in mind in ranking cognitive capacities in terms of purity,<sup>69</sup> it does seem plain, given the context, that he means that ranking to indicate a corresponding ranking both in intrinsic value and in terms of being suited to the apprehension of fine and worthwhile things. The impurity of touch and taste will presumably limit the value not only of tactile and gustatory activities, but also of pleasures taken in them and of appetites for them.

Against the background of this conception of what accounts for differences in value among kinds of pleasure and pleasant activity, it is, I think, readily intelligible how Aristotle can hold that the sources of pleasure that temperance and self-indulgence relate to are, in their own right, of no value. They are, to begin with, activities primarily of the sense of touch, impurest of cognitive capacities. It is hard to see, moreover, how there could be much fineness about the tangible characteristics with which such activities are concerned—the tangible characteristics, that is, that one apprehends in swallowing solid or liquid nutriments and in employing one's sexual organs. However, if these features or characteristics are not in their own right of any significant value—for instance, in that they lack order, symmetry, and determinacy—then that fact, by Aristotle's lights, is bound to place severe limits on the value of activities in relation to them. Thus he may well think that these particular kinds of activities are not, in their own right, of any significant value: considered in their own right, rather than as they relate (for instance) to the relevant kinds of bodily needs, they are neither naturally choiceworthy nor naturally to be avoided, but intermediate between these.

It is time to take stock. I have attempted to identify three interrelated and distinctively Nicomachean developments in Aristotle's thinking about temperance, self-indulgence, and the pleasures and pleasant activities they relate to. These are, first, that Aristotle argues for the view that self-indulgence deserves to be reproached, rather than simply reporting that it is reproached; secondly, a narrowing of the proper domain of temperance and self-indulgence; and thirdly, a devaluation of the objects of temperance and self-indulgence, together with a conception of what accounts for the value of pleasures, and of pleasurable activities, when the latter are considered in their own right, purely with regard to their intrinsic characteristics. Version B clearly exhibits signs of the first and the third of these developments; and it withdraws Version A's commitment to a conception of the proper domain of lack of control, and by implication of

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Sens.* 3, 439<sup>b</sup>25–440<sup>a</sup>3: colours that are mixtures (of black and white) according to simple numerical proportions seem to be the most pleasant ones.

<sup>69</sup> Broadie, *ad loc.*, speculates plausibly that 'the degrees of purity are degrees of independence from physical involvement with the object of cognition', and that 'such independence is assumed to carry greater cognitive refinement' (p. 438).

temperance and self-indulgence, that conflicts with the second of these three developments. Version A, by contrast, fails to show any sign of any of these developments. Moreover, Version B distinguishes sharply between lack of control over anger and the qualified forms of appetitive lack of control, whereas Version A awkwardly lumps them together. In a difference that may well be related, Version B and its sequel in *NE* VII. 5 (1149<sup>a</sup>21–4) emphasize the heterogeneity that is present among the forms of lack of control, plain and qualified, and reject the idea that the term 'lack of control' is univocal. In light of these latter thoughts, Version A's Anthropos comparison with its apparent reliance on a generic use of the term 'lacking control' seems unsustainable.

We should conclude, I think, that Aristotle very probably composed Version B as a replacement for, rather than an addition to, Version A. Moreover, and rather more importantly, I have presented considerations that seem to me to suggest strongly that Version B is a piece of writing that belongs in the context of specifically the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It fully takes into account, and actively reflects, a number of interrelated and distinctively Nicomachean developments. I suggest, then, that 1147<sup>b</sup>23 *ἐπεὶ*–1148<sup>a</sup>22 *ἰσχυρά* is a relatively early, perhaps Eudemean, exposition of the distinction between plain and qualified lack of control, and that Aristotle was meaning to supersede<sup>70</sup> that earlier exposition when he wrote what Bywater's (1894) edition presents as the second half of the chapter.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> One might object that if the whole of 1147<sup>b</sup>23–1148<sup>a</sup>22 is set aside as subsequently superseded, we lose not only those parts of Version A that have counterparts in Version B, but also the two supplementary remarks about lack of control and self-indulgence at 1148<sup>a</sup>13–22. It may seem to be of value to have on the table, already at this stage of the discussion, the important idea that lack of control and self-indulgence differ in terms of how they relate to decision. (I thank John Cooper for raising this concern.) However, *NE* VII. 7, 1150<sup>a</sup>16–33, covers all of the ground covered by those two supplementary remarks. Aristotle there begins by distinguishing between self-indulgence on the one hand and lack of control and softness on the other, in terms of whether or not the person in question is acting on decision. He then adds what is clearly an exact analogue to 1148<sup>a</sup>17–22, appropriately augmented by a reference to the parallel case of anger, and with the references to pain removed. I suggest, then, that discussion of the ground initially covered in Version A in the revised version is spread out across VII. 4–VII. 7 (or even VII. 8). In VII. 4–6, Aristotle isolates plain lack of control by distinguishing it, first, from the other forms of lack of control over appetites (VII. 4); secondly, from beastly and morbid forms of lack of control (VII. 5); and, thirdly, from lack of control over anger. He then, and only then, brings in the relevant kinds of pain, and softness and resistance (VII. 7, 1150<sup>a</sup>9–15). Having done that, he offers a careful and detailed comparison between lack of control and its close relative, self-indulgence, which continues into VII. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Susemihl's Teubner edition, by contrast, brackets what I have been calling Version B, taking it to be a doublet of 1147<sup>b</sup>23–1148<sup>a</sup>17. It goes without saying that I think this to be a disastrous mistake. On the other hand, I am not meaning to advocate excising Version A from the text of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, tempting though that may seem. (This is because to excise the earlier version would seem to me, on consideration, to be an attempt to impose more order than is appropriate given the status of the *NE* as a text that its author neither published nor, I think, finalized for publication. I am indebted to Myles Burnyeat for impressing this point on me.) I do think, however, that an optimal edition of the *NE* would indicate, perhaps by means of a comment in the apparatus, that the text from 1148<sup>a</sup>22 *ἐπεὶ* to the end of the chapter seems to be a revised version of 1147<sup>b</sup>23–1148<sup>a</sup>22, arguably meant to supersede it. One might wonder how, if I am right, Version A got into the text of the *NE*. The most economical explanation is that, in the course of revising, Aristotle wrote Version B in the margin next



## 4. Conclusion

Once Version A is set aside as an earlier and subsequently superseded bit of exposition, *NE VII. 4* can be seen to offer a clear and attractive conception of plain and qualified lack of control. According to that conception, lack of control, speaking without qualification, relates primarily to the pleasures of eating, drinking, and having sex, in so far as these activities engage the senses of touch and, to a lesser extent, taste. Aristotle will go on to say that lack of control over those particular kinds of pleasure, and only over them, is not only lack of control, speaking without qualification, but also lack of control, properly speaking. Other forms of lack of control—such as lack of control over anger, honour, or profit—are not only qualified forms, but are forms of lack of control only in a transferred use of the term. His argument for this view is that lack of control is a strongly reprehensible disposition of character, and that among ordinary, non-pathological dispositions only one of the known forms of lack of control over something or other is in fact reprehensible in this way: namely, lack of control over the specified kinds of pleasure.

Aristotle's conception of plain and qualified lack of control enables him to give clear and well-supported answers to a number of questions that arise from his initial commitment, in *NE VII. 3*, to the existence of plain lack of control. To begin with, one might wonder what basis there is for singling out one particular form among the various known forms of lack of control as being unqualified lack of control. Aristotle's answer is that this one, and only this one, deserves the kind of reproach that is implied by bare or unqualified ascriptions to people of lack of control. The basic idea of psychological lack of control, we may add, is that of being mastered by something that is in some way external to the self; and of all the things that people are seen to lack control over, the pleasures of touch caused by ingesting nutriment and having sex are most clearly external to, because they are remotest from, who we truly are.<sup>72</sup> Pleasures of these kinds do not, in and of themselves, engage our rational faculties in any way at all, and in failing to do so they utterly fail to engage what distinguishes us as humans from the brute animals (cf. *NE III. 10*, 1118<sup>b</sup>1–3). Moreover, these pleasures, and our tendencies to pursue them, are precisely those things about us that most stand in need of being controlled. The ethical failure of the person who lacks control over pleasures of these particular kinds is therefore especially dramatic. He yields mastery over himself precisely to those psychological forces that most stand in need of being mastered, if they are not to render his conduct unworthy of his humanity.

Aristotle might add that 'lack of control' is—unlike, say, 'virtue'—not a genus term. As a result, to ascribe lack of control to someone, without saying in what particular way he or she lacks control, is not at all to claim, or even to suggest, that they exhibit the complete range of the various forms of lack of control. To think

that any such claim might be involved is to show ignorance of, or disregard for, the way the term 'lack of control' is actually used. One has only to take a look at Xenophon's *Memorabilia* to realize that Aristotle is right about the way the term is employed in its absolute use.

Finally, our chapter has not only distinguished between plain lack of control and various appetitive forms of qualified lack of control. It has also revisited lack of control over anger. However, it has not yet offered an argument for the distinctness of lack of control over anger from lack of control, speaking without qualification. This is as it should be. The argument offered in our chapter relies on a comparison between different kinds of appetitive dispositions in terms of the value of the sources of pleasure they relate to, and lack of control over anger is no appetitive, pleasure-directed disposition, and should not be assimilated to one. To this extent, then, Aristotle has not yet completed the argument in favour of his rather stringent conception of the proper domain of lack of control, speaking without qualification. He must still make clear why lack of control over anger does not deserve the kind of reproach that is implied by unqualified ascriptions of lack of control. But that is a topic that belongs to another chapter.

to Version A, and whoever put the *NE* together within a generation or so of Aristotle's death decided to place Version A before Version B, at this point inserting the infelicitous back reference at 1148<sup>a</sup>25.

<sup>72</sup> For this deeper justification of Aristotle's identification of one kind of lack of control as plain lack of control, I am indebted to a suggestion by Sarah Broadie, and to discussion with Ben Morison.