

Self-control and Akrasia¹

(5500 words)

Imagine you are Ulysses. You know that the songs of the Sirens are extremely beautiful as well as dangerously seductive, failure to resist the temptation to join the Sirens being likely to prove fatal. Suppose that by contrast to the original story, you fail to get tied to the mast – you fail to bind yourself, to use Jon Elster’s expression (1977). Is it possible that in spite of your better judgment, you jump overboard to follow the Sirens? Suppose that it is freely and intentionally that you jump into the sea. You act freely in the sense that nothing forces you to act the way you do – it is not because you are pushed overboard by a gust of wind or compelled by a compulsive urge that you jump. And your action is intentional – for instance, you do not jump because you trip over a loose rope or because you are so confused as to think that jumping into the sea is the best way to escape the Sirens. Can it really be the case that at the same time as you jump, you really judge that you have decisive reasons not to join the Sirens, or that all things considered, it would be better – decisively better, in this instance – not to do so?

Such actions, which have been called “akratic” (from *akrasia*, which means lack of mastery in Greek) but also “incontinent” (from the Latin *incontinentia*) and “weak-willed”, can be characterized roughly as actions performed in spite of the agent’s better judgment. A question that has been at the center of recent philosophical debates is whether such actions are possible. This debate can be traced back to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Initially conceived of as a problem belonging to ethics, the question addressed being whether and, if so, how an agent could yield to temptation in spite of his knowing that this was bad, the recent debate concerns our general understanding of how actions are related to practical judgment. Even though everyone in the debate would agree that akratic actions appear to be a commonly recognized phenomenon, it is only in the wake of Donald Davidson’s influential paper, “How is Weakness of the Will Possible?” (Davidson 1970), that philosophers have come to accept the possibility of akratic actions. As we shall see the question remains controversial.

The question of the possibility of akratic actions obviously depends on how such actions are characterized, and it is no surprise that very different conceptions of akratic actions have been proposed. One difficulty in understanding recent debates is that, as I indicated, many terms been used to refer to akratic actions, but moreover quite different phenomena have been distinguished. For example, Richard Holton (1999; 2009) proposes to distinguish between *akrasia* and weakness of will, where the former relates to acting in spite of one’s better judgment, and the latter is defined in terms of irrational

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reconsideration of the agent's resolution. So it is important to clarify whether the disagreement is about how to describe what is supposed to be one and the same phenomenon, or whether the discussion is about a number of different and possibly only loosely related phenomena.

In spite of the important variety of available accounts, what is commonly assumed is that akrasia is opposed to self-control, akratic actions often being thought to instantiate a paradigmatic self-control failure. Weakness of will understood as irrational resolution reconsideration also counts as a paradigmatic self-control failure. As such, that both akrasia and weakness of will are considered to be opposed to self-control is not a problem. Akrasia and weakness of will could well constitute two kinds of self-control failures, along with addiction and compulsion. The question that is raised, however, is that of the nature of self-control. Is self-control one unified phenomenon, or are there several distinct phenomena? Moreover, a puzzle arises here. If we suppose that akrasia is opposed to self-control, the question is how akratic actions could be free and intentional. After all, it would seem that it is only if an action manifests self-control that it can count as free.

My plan is to explore the relation between akrasia and self-control. The first section presents what I shall call the *standard conception*, according to which akrasia and self-control are contraries, and introduces the puzzle that this conception raises. The second section turns to the arguments for and against the possibility of free and intentional akratic actions. The third section questions the claim that akratic actions are necessarily opposed to actions manifesting self-control.

1. *The standard conception*

The contemporary debate around akrasia is largely based on Aristotle's seminal account. According to Aristotle, *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, along with virtue and vice, are character traits (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII). *Enkrateia*, which literally means mastery and is often translated by "continence", but also by "self-control", is not as praiseworthy as virtue. This is so because by contrast to the virtuous agent, the enkratic agent experiences passions such as anger or exaggerated appetites for pleasure, which are contrary to reason. What characterizes the enkratic agent is that he manages to resist these temptations. As a result, the enkratic agent generally does what a virtuous agent would in similar circumstances. Similarly, *akrasia*, which literally means lack of mastery, is not as blameworthy as vice. The akratic agent not only experiences the same wayward passions as the enkratic agent, but he also yield to these passions. By contrast to the vicious agent, however, the akratic agent has knowledge of the right action. Interestingly, the knowledge attributed to the akratic agent is not unqualified. The akratic agent has

knowledge, but he is not exercising or using it, like someone who is asleep, mad, or drunk (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 1147a10-24; see Kraut 2008; Müller 2015).

By failing to attribute full-blown knowledge of the akratic agent, Aristotle appears to deny the possibility of “clear-eyed akrasia” (Charlton 1988: chap. 3). Aristotle thus comes close to the Socratic thesis, according to which it is not possible to act against one’s knowledge of the right, a thesis that Aristotle in fact criticizes as going against the appearances. More specifically, Socrates is said to have denied the possibility of voluntary action performed in spite of knowing that what is done is bad or less than the best: “(...) no one (...) acts against what he believes best – people act so only by reason of ignorance” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 1145b25-30). A similar denial can be found in Plato: “No one who either knows or believes that there is another possible course of action better than the one he is following, will ever continue on his present course.” (*Protagoras* 358b-c)

Even though only a few contemporary thinkers would be tempted by the claim that there is no akrasia in any sense similar to what Socrates had in mind, the basic opposition between akrasia and self-control is widely accepted (see Davidson 1970; Levy 2011). Here is for instance how Alfred Mele states this view: “I will follow Aristotle in understanding *self-control* and *akrasia* as two sides of the same coin. [...] Self-controlled individuals are agents who have significant motivation to conduct themselves as they judge best and a robust capacity to do what it takes so to conduct themselves in the face of (actual or anticipated) motivation [...]. Akratic individuals, conversely, suffer from a deficiency in one or both of these connections.” (2002: 531; see also 1992; 1995)

These claims concern akrasia as an attribute of agents. Contemporary discussions have rather focused on types of actions. Mele specifies what he calls “strict incontinent actions” in the following way:

An action *A* is a *strict incontinent action* if and only if it is performed intentionally and freely and, at the time at which it is performed, its agent consciously holds a judgment to the effect that there is good and sufficient reason for his not performing an *A* at that time. (1992: 7; 2012; see also Davidson 1970: 22)

According to this definition, strict akratic actions are freely and intentionally performed in spite of the agent’s better judgment, where the better judgment is characterized in terms of good and sufficient reasons – what appear to be decisive reasons – and where the conflict is specified as being synchronic instead of involving a diachronic change of mind.

Mele argues that such actions are perfectly possible. However, if we assume that free akratic actions are possible, and if we assume that akrasia is opposed to self-control,

it follows that actions manifesting lack of self-control can be free. This might seem not much of a problem, but on reflection the idea that freedom and self-control can come apart is puzzling. As many would agree, free agency requires self-control. Intuitively, an agent is free only if she is in control of what she does. Robert Kane, for one, starts his contribution to *Four Views of Free Will* as follows: “The problem of free will has arisen in history whenever people have been led to suspect that their actions might be determined or necessitated by factors unknown to them and beyond their control.” (Kane 2007: 5). Someone who is under the control of another agent is as unfree as a marionette pulled by strings. Similarly, it appears that an agent is only free if she is in control of what she thinks and desires. If what an agent wants is controlled by someone else, as when the person is under hypnosis, the agent is just as unfree as the marionette in the hands of the puppeteer. So, self-control clearly appears necessary to free agency.

One way to come to see that there is a puzzle is to focus on the notion of free agency. As Gary Watson underlined in his influential article “Free Will and Free Action”, the notion of free agency involves two different features that both need to be captured, self-determination (or autonomy) and the availability of alternative possibilities (Watson 1987: 145). Now even if self-control and autonomy, understood as the capacity to govern oneself, might well be different concepts, they clearly appear closely connected. It is unclear how one could govern oneself without also controlling oneself. Indeed, self-control is often thought to be essential to autonomy. Here is how Marina Oshana formulates this assumption: “Autonomous persons are beings in *actual* control of their own choices, actions, and goals. [...] Implicit in the idea of actual control over one’s life is the idea of self-control.” (Oshana 2006: 3)

Now, the problem is that if free agency requires self-control, then it would seem that free agency excludes lack of self-control. Put differently, in so far as an action is free, it cannot be one that manifests lack of self-control. But this makes for a problem if one accepts that there are strict akratic actions. This puzzle can be expressed in the form of a paradox:

- 1) Self-control excludes akrasia.
- 2) Akratic actions can be free.
- 3) Free agency requires self-control.

There are at least as many ways to solve this puzzle as there are propositions. You can question whether self-control excludes akrasia, whether akratic actions can be free, and whether free agency requires self-control. I shall assume that given a reasonable understanding of free agency and self-control, free agency requires self-control. Instead, I want to focus on the two other propositions making up the paradox, starting with the second one.

Before I do so, let me note that a similar paradox involves the notion of autonomy. In a nutshell, the problem is that it seems plausible that autonomy requires self-control, and yet there is reason to think that actions that are characterized by a lack of self-control, such as akratic actions, can be autonomous, given that they can be free. The question that is raised is whether akratic actions can be autonomous (Mele 1995: 194, fn. 11; 2002).

Also, let me also pause to mark the distance between contemporary discussions and Aristotle's conception. Put simply, no such paradox arises for Aristotle. First, Aristotle was thinking in terms of voluntariness and not in terms of the modern notion of free agency. Even so, a similar puzzle could be spelled out by tying voluntariness to self-control. But second, and more importantly, neither our puzzle nor its ancient equivalent would have been a problem for Aristotle. This is so because Aristotle presumably would have just as many qualms about the possibility of strict akrasia as he has about voluntary actions that conflict with full-blown knowledge.

2. *The possibility of strict akrasia*²

In a striking passage, Sarah Broadie claims “we all know that [incontinence] often happens; thus we know that it can happen” (1991: 266). As I said, she is far from alone in accepting the possibility of free akratic actions, a majority of contemporary philosophers being in agreement on this point (Bratman 1979; Audi 1979; Broadie 1991; Smith 1994; McIntyre 1990; 2006; Holton 1999; 2009; Arpaly 2000; Kennett 2001; Searle 2001; Stroud 2003; 2008; Henden 2004; Dodd 2009). Compared with how akrasia has been conceived in the history of philosophy since Socrates, there thus has been a radical shift (but see Hare 1952; Davidson 1970; Watson 1977; Buss 1997; Tenenbaum 1999; 2003; 2007; Levy 2011 for the view that strict akrasia is impossible). So, what are the arguments for and against the possibility of strict akrasia?

On the face of it, free and intentional action performed in spite of the judgment that one has sufficient reasons not to perform that action, where that judgment is contemporaneous to the action, seems perfectly possible. First, there is no blatant contradiction in the definition of strict akratic actions. Indeed, it seems easy enough to imagine cases satisfying the definition. Is it not possible that Ulysses jumps into the sea to join the Sirens even though exactly at the same time, he judges that he has sufficient reasons not to do so? Or if you find this example far-fetched, is it not possible that Sarah judges that she has sufficient reasons not to have a third chocolate mousse while, freely and intentionally, Sarah nonetheless goes for it? Such possibilities are hard to deny. Finally, a further reason to accept the possibility of strict akratic actions comes from the

² Part of this section is drawn from Tappolet 2013.

fact that we consider agents to be responsible for their akratic actions. This suggests that we consider the actions to be free, for it is plausible to assume that actions for which we hold someone morally responsible are free actions. It would appear unfair to consider someone to be responsible for an action caused by an irresistible urge, for instance. At most, we could consider that person to be responsible for not having developed the required self-control capacities, but this is a distinct failure.

Of course, appearances might be misleading. Maybe these descriptions are inaccurate. How could it be excluded that Ulysses in a sense knows that joining the Sirens is too risky, but that there is something wrong with that cognition (Tenenbaum 2007)? Or else, Ulysses might have undergone a possibly irrational change of mind, the songs of the Sirens causing him to revise his evaluation of the situation (Ainslie 1975; 1992; Elster 1979; Jackson 1984)? Ulysses might even have resolved not to yield to the seduction of the Sirens, but again, their songs make him revise his resolution (Holton 1999; Dodd 2009). Similarly how could it be excluded that Sarah does not actually judge but merely believe in a dispositional sense that she should not have this chocolate mousse (Levy 2011)? Maybe Sarah only judges that she should reduce her calorie intake overall, where this goal is so vague as to be compatible with judging you should ingest any particular desert (Tenenbaum and Raffman 2012; Andreou 2014). (For yet other possibilities, such as hypocrisy, confusion, mention of a purely conventional norm, etc., see Hare 1992.)

But then, maybe not. It could well be that these alternative descriptions correspond to possible variations of our two cases, but that at the time they fail to accurately describe Ulysses and Sarah. So it might seem that what we have is a mere clash of intuitions, where little can be done to move forward. Yet, I believe that this conclusion misrepresents the dialectic. What has to be underlined is that strict akrasia appears perfectly possible, and so what is needed to deny its possibility is sufficient reason to believe that appearances are misleading. Giving such a reason is exactly what philosophers from Socrates onwards have attempted to do. They have lined up a number of arguments to show that strict akrasia is not possible. Let us look at the main arguments. As far as I can see, four of them can be distinguished.

The first argument against the possibility of strict akrasia appeals to an attractive conception of intentional action, according to which intentional action is done in the light of some imagined good (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, I; Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, 1st Part of the 2nd Part, question 1; Anscombe 1957; Davidson 1970). Obviously, this conception and the ensuing argument could just as well be expressed in terms of sufficient reasons. On this conception, an agent who intentionally acts sets a positive value on some end, and given his belief that an action of the kind he can perform will realize the valued end, he acts. More precisely, an action will count as intentional only if the agent judges that it is best for him to perform that action (Davidson 1970: 23). If we

further suppose that an action needs to be intentional for it to be free, it follows that actions that conflict with what the agent judges best cannot be free. Thus, in so far as akratic actions are not in the guise of the good, they cannot be free.

In response, it can be denied that intentional actions have to be done in the guise of the good (Stocker 1979; Velleman 1992). For instance, as David Velleman underlines, Satan seems an example of an agent who intentionally pursues the bad (Velleman 1992: 18). Be that as it may, it is not necessary to deny that intentional action is performed in the guise of the good in order to make room for strict akrasia. The assumption in the above argument that should come under scrutiny is that acting in the light of the good requires making a judgment. To make this assumption is to overlook a number of plausible alternatives. The mere fact that an action is caused by a desire might be sufficient for the considering that the action is done in the light of the good. Indeed, desires have been considered to be perceptions of the good (Stampe 1987; Oddie 2005; Tenenbaum 2007). Another possibility is to suggest that acting on the basis of emotions can, at least in certain conditions, be seen as acting in the light of the good (Jones 2003; Tappolet 2003; forthcoming).

A related argument has been offered by Sarah Buss (1997). The argument turns on role of preferences in intentional actions. It is based on the plausible idea that someone who acts a certain way while she would prefer to act otherwise does not act freely and intentionally. Thus, it seems impossible to force an agent to do something intentionally when she prefers not to do it. At best, it is possible to modify her preferences by using threats. In Buss own words: “[...] since no one can be compelled to set a particular goal for herself as long as she prefers to pursue a different goal instead, no one can be compelled to intend to do one thing as long as she prefers to do another.” (1997: 18) If we further assume that to prefer doing something amounts to judging that it would be better, all things considered, to do this thing, or else to judge that one has more reasons to do it, it follows that the agent who acts against her better judgment does not act freely and intentionally.

The question, obviously, is whether it is justified to take the relation between preferences and better judgments to be this close. The question of what kind of mental states preferences are is controversial (Hausman 2012). In any case, there is surely room for the view that preferences and better judgments can come apart. Preferences might be understood in purely behavioral terms, for instance. Even if we take the preferences at stake to be psychological states, however, there is room for the claim that only appropriate preferences are correlated to better judgments. On this account, to judge that something is better than something else, all things considered, would be to judge that it would be fitting or appropriate, in the relevant sense, to prefer the former to the latter (for such accounts, see Brentano 1889; Scanlon 1998, *inter alia*).

The third argument I would like to consider is also closely connected to the conception of intentional action as being done in the guise of the good. It is based on considerations bearing on the nature of the judgments that are involved in akratic actions. The intuition that is invoked is that such judgments, whatever their exact content, are not theoretical, but practical. Such judgments do not merely describe what is the case concerning our practical reasons, but tell us what to do, and motivate us accordingly. According to this conception, there is a necessary or internal tie between better judgments, on the one hand, and motivation and action, on the other.

Richard Hare (1952), a proponent of a radical version of internalism with respect to moral judgments, claimed that to account for the action-guidingness of moral judgments, one has to adopt noncognitivism and suppose that such judgments involve imperatives, which we address to ourselves. When you assent to the judgment that you ought to tell the truth, you order yourself to do so. And given this, Hare thought it would follow that you will indeed tell the truth, if you are free to do so. Thus, it would be impossible for an agent to freely fail to do something while judging that she ought to do this. If the agent fails to act according to such a judgment, it must be because she was physically or psychologically unable to do so. Or else, the agent in fact did not really make the judgment in question. Hare's views, and more particularly his noncognitivism about moral judgments, are highly problematic. However, it is not necessary to embrace noncognitivism in order to defend internalism about practical judgments. One can simply claim that there is an internal relation between better judgments, whatever their exact nature, on the one hand, and motivation and action, on the other. Thus, one can hold with Davidson that if an agent judges that an action *x* is better than another action *y*, she will be more motivated to do *x* than to do *y*, and if she is free to do *x*, she will do *x*, if she does either *x* or *y* (Davidson 1970: 23) As we have seen, the akratic agent judges that what she does not do is better. According to principle we are considering, if the agent makes such a judgment and is free to act accordingly, she will act accordingly, if she acts at all. If not, then she was not free to do so.

What should we think of this principle? We can agree that it is necessary to establish a distinction between theoretical judgments, which simply aim at describing reality, and practical judgments, which are in some way internally connected to motivation and action. However, as has been underlined by Sarah Stroud (2003), the distinction between these two kinds of judgments can be maintained without ruling out strict akrasia. Following Michael Smith (1994), it is possible to develop a weaker form of internalism with respect to moral, and more generally, with respect to practical judgments. Smith proposes that if an agent judges that she has to perform an action, either she will be motivated to act accordingly, or else she suffers from practical irrationality. In so far as this weaker principle establishes a tight connection between practical judgments and motivation or action, it preserves the distinction between

practical and theoretical judgments. But of course, this new principle is perfectly compatible with the possibility of strict akratic actions. What it entails is simply that such actions are practically irrational, something which is hardly controversial. Even those who claim that it is sometimes more rational to act against one's better judgment agree that some irrationality is involved (Audi 1990; McIntyre 1990; Arpaly 2000; Brunero 2013).

The last argument against the possibility of strict akratic actions I shall discuss directly questions the claim that akratic can be free. According to Gary Watson (1977), it is not possible to distinguish between akratic and compulsive actions in terms of freedom: neither of them could have acted otherwise. Watson asks what explains that the agent fails to resist the temptation. He discusses two explanations, both of which he considers to be unsatisfactory. According to the first explanation, the agent does not resist the temptation because he chooses not to resist. Watson claims that we cannot assume this, for "to choose not to implement this choice would be to change [the] original judgment" (1977: 55). Thus, what we would have is a case of recklessness, not a case of akrasia. The second explanation is that the effort to resist the temptation is culpably insufficient. If we suppose that the action is free, we have to assume that the agent could have made a sufficient effort. Hence, the question is why the agent did not make this effort. Again, one cannot say that the agent did not make the relevant effort because he thought the effort was not worth it, for that would indicate that the agent had changed his mind. Moreover, one cannot say that the agent was mistaken about the effort required, for this would be a different fault from that of akrasia.

The intuition driving Watson's argument is that choice, and hence free action, follows better judgment. This is a conception of action which ties together free agency and autonomy, and sees free action as flowing from the agent's evaluative capacities. What free action requires is controversial, but the force of the conception Watson is proposing should not be underestimated. Before putting aside Watson's argument, we would need a plausible alternative to the account of free agency he proposes. The fact is that there are a number of alternatives. According to one such alternative, free agency is explained in terms of the exercise of a rational capacity. The difference between the weak agent and the compulsive agent is that the latter has, but fails to exercise, the rational capacity to bring her desires into line with her better judgment, while the latter lacks this capacity (see Smith 2003). In any case, what has to be underlined is that there are accounts according to which choice and free action need not follow from judgments regarding the good or regarding reasons.

Let us take a step back. There appear to be no conclusive arguments against the possibility of strict akratic actions. In fact, what transpires from the discussion is that the objections to that possibility rely on a number of quite theoretical and controversial claims regarding human agency. Given the initial plausibility of the possibility of strict

akrasia, it is far from clear that they should convince us. In any case, it would seem that to solve the puzzle we started with we need to reconsider the standard conception, according to which akrasia and self-control are opposite.

3. *Akrasia and self-control*

As I said, the claim that akratic actions cannot by definition be actions that manifest self-control is standardly accepted. But on reflection, this is far from obvious. By all accounts the notion of self-control is a relational one. The basic notion is that of the self being in control of something else – her actions, her thoughts, her feelings, or more generally and also somewhat more mysteriously, of her own self. By contrast, the concept of actions freely and intentionally performed against the agent’s better judgment does not, as such, involve the idea of the self. What needs to be added to arrive at the idea of a self-control failure is the further thought that better judgments represent the self. In Aristotelian terms, if the self is the faculty of reason, acting against the verdict of reason, acting against this verdict constitutes a self-control failure. According to Aristotle, “reason more than anything else is man.” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178a; also see Plato, *Republic*, 588b-592b; Watson 1975). The question is whether we should accept this conception of agency.

A first problem to consider, however, is that it is plausible to distinguish different notions of self-control. In an often quoted passage, John L. Austin offers a counter-example to the view that acting against one’s better judgment necessarily comes with loss of self-control.

Plato, I suppose, and after him Aristotle, fastened this confusion upon us [...]. I am very partial to ice cream, and a bombe is served divided into segments corresponding one to one with the persons at High Table: I am tempted to help myself to two segments and do so, thus succumbing to temptation and even conceivably (but why necessarily?) going against my principles. But do I lose control of myself? Do I raven, do I snatch the morsel from the dish and wolf them down, impervious to the consternation of my colleagues? Not a bit of it. We often succumb to temptation with calm and even with finesse. (1970: 198 fn. 1)

A plausible move to account for such examples is to distinguish between different capacities. Thus, Jeannette Kennett (2013) proposes to distinguish between intentional self-control and normative self-control (see also Kennett 2001; Mele 2002; Schroeter 2004; Henden 2008). Accordingly, the agent helping himself to two bombe segments can be said to have intentional control over his action, in the sense that his action manifests his capacity to bring his action in line with his intention. However, that action would fail

to manifest normative self-control, understood as the capacity to bring one's actions into line with one's self.

A second type of cases cannot be dealt with in this way. Consider the often discussed example of Huckleberry Finn (Bennett 1974). As the case is construed by Alison McIntyre, Huck fails to turn Jim in to the slave hunters in spite of his judgment that all things considered, he ought to do so. Now it seems plausible to say that Huck's decision not to turn Jim in is morally more admirable, which makes it a case of so-called "inverse akrasia" (Arpaly and Schroeder 1999). But what matters here is that Huck's decision appears both more rational and, in particular, more responsive to reasons compared to the decision to act on his better judgment (Audi 1990; McIntyre 1993; Arpaly 2000; Jones 2003; Tappolet 2003; Brunero 2013). In particular, it is more reason-responsive because his better judgment allegedly neglects important considerations, such as Jim's being his friend, Jim's desire for freedom, etc. Now, it seems that it is Huck's emotions – his feeling of friendship and his sympathy for Jim – that lead him to disregard his doubtful moral principles. Huck's emotions thus appear to enable him to be properly reason-responsive, and more so than if he had acted on his better judgment (Jones 2003; Tappolet 2003, forthcoming).

If this is on the right lines, what we have here is an action freely and intentionally performed against the agent's better judgment that nonetheless manifests the capacity to bring one's action into line with the agent's self. We would have an akratic action that also manifests normative self-control. This is so, at least, if we assume that normative self-control requires reason-responsiveness (Kennett 2001; Henden 2008). The claim is that normative self-control, which constitutes us as autonomous, self-governed agents, is the capacity to govern oneself according to one's reasons. The assumption that normative self-control requires reason-responsiveness rests on a conception of the self that would need to be examined. But its initial plausibility makes it reasonable to suggest that akrasia need not be opposed to normative self-control.

Conclusion

Let us look back at the puzzle we started with. The problem was that if we assume that free agency requires self-control, so that free actions are actions that manifest self-control, the possibility of strict akratic actions is ruled out. As we have seen, the three following claims are inconsistent:

- 1) Self-control excludes akrasia.
- 2) Akratic actions can be free.
- 3) Free agency requires self-control.

I have argued that the solution to the paradox is to reject the first proposition. Not only can there be actions performed against the agent's better judgment which manifest intentional self-control, but there can be actions performed against the agent's better judgment which manifest normative self-control, the very form of self-control which has commonly been thought to be opposed to akrasia. In a nutshell, *pace* Aristotle, akrasia does not exclude enkrateia.

Related topics

Reasons-responsive views; Aristotle; Thomas Aquinas; Addiction; Deliberation; Free will's connection with responsibility; Phenomenology of agency

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