

THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
MORAL VIRTUE: AN EXPLORATION IN ANALYTIC MORAL THEOLOGY

**A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfillment of the
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by

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Abstract

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In the last 70 years there has been an explosion of philosophical and theological work on the nature of virtue and the process of virtue formation. Yet philosophers and theologians have paid little attention to the phenomenon of temptation and its role in developing virtue. Indeed, little analytic work has been done on the nature of temptation. This study aims to fill this gap in moral philosophy and theology by offering an analytic moral conception of temptation and explicating its connection to the development of virtue.

This project deploys a new iteration of an older methodology of integrating philosophy and theology that may now appropriately be called “analytic moral theology.” In discerning the nature of temptation and its role in virtue formation, theological sources provide foundational guidance. Analytic moral philosophy provides illumination, coherence, and conceptual robustness to the theological foundation.

The argument developed follows in the footsteps of John Hick’s soul-making theodicy by contending that the development of virtue requires a world that permits of experiences of temptation. This conclusion is substantiated by a close moral analysis of the nature of temptation that builds on key works done in philosophical moral psychology, philosophy of action, and philosophical theology. The emerging conceptualization of temptation is then compared and contrasted with the closely related moral phenomenon of *akrasia* and weakness of will, and finally interfaced with a neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue development. In the end, Thomas Aquinas’s understanding of infused virtue is employed as a theological test of the thesis and conditions the scope of the thesis. In light of this constructive analysis of the nature of temptation and its argument for temptation’s role in acquiring moral virtue, this project makes a contribution to philosophical Christian ethics.

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Abbreviations

AJPh: *Australian Journal of Philosophy*

APA: *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*

APhQ: *American Philosophical Quarterly*

CJP: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*

CUAP: The Catholic University of America Press

CUP: Cambridge University Press

CTSA: *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*

EtPer: *Ethical Perspectives*

EPS: Evangelical Philosophical Society

ETMP: *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*

EQ: *The Evangelical Quarterly*

FPh: *Faith and Philosophy*

GUP: Georgetown University Press

HPhQ.: *History of Philosophy Quarterly*

HUP: Harvard University Press

IJPR: *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*

IJPhSt: *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*

IVP: InterVarsity Press

IUP: Indiana University Press

JAAR: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

JAnPh: *Journal of Ancient Philosophy*

JAT: *Journal of Analytic Theology*

JE: *The Journal of Ethics*

JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

JCR: *Journal of Consumer Research*

JME: *Journal of Medical Ethics*

JMT: *Journal of Moral Theology*

JPh.: *The Journal of Philosophy*

JPSP: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

JRE: *Journal of Religious Ethics*

JSCE: *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*

JSNT: *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*

JSP: *Journal of Social Philosophy*

JTI: *Journal of Theological Interpretations*

JVI: *The Journal of Value Inquiry*

MoEm: *Motivation & Emotion*

MSP: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*

MT: *Modern Theology*

NB: *New Blackfriars*

NDUP: Notre Dame University Press

NE: *Nicomachean Ethics*

OBC: *Oxford Bible Commentary*

OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*

OUP: Oxford University Press

IEP: *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

PacPh.: *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*

PAS: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*

PE: *Philosophical Explorations*

PP: *Philosophical Perspectives*

PhPa: *Philosophical Papers*

Ph&PhenR: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

PhR: *The Philosophical Review*

PhSt: *Philosophical Studies*

PT: *Philosophical Topics*

PQ: *Philosophical Quarterly*

PUP: Princeton University Press

RelStud: *Religious Studies: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*

RI: *Religious Inquiries*

RMeta: *The Review of Metaphysics: A Philosophical Quarterly*

RNTS: *Reading the New Testament Series*

RTR: *The Reformed Theological Review*

SEP: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

SJP: *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*

SCE: *Studies in Christian Ethics*

SPHP: *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TMS: *The Modern Schoolman*

TNTC: *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*

TS: *Theological Studies*

TT: *Theology Today*

UCAP: University of California Press

UCP: University of Chicago Press

UMP: University of Minnesota Press

WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*

WJKP: Westminster John Knox Press

WTJ: *Wesleyan Theological Journal*

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Methodology and Objective

1 Introduction: The Project and Methodology of This Study

“What kind of person will people say you were at your funeral? How will they describe the *real* you, the deep character of who you are?”¹ asks David Brooks. His point is not a macabre exercise but rather an invitation to reflect on our “eulogy traits” versus our “resume traits.” In the language of ethics, Brooks is asking about our moral character, whether we are virtuous or vicious. The assumption he makes is that the readers do indeed want to have good “eulogy traits” and not merely good “resume traits”—that, in fact, we humans want to have excellent moral characters. But how do we get there, what do we need in order to become virtuous? What factors need to be in place even to have the opportunity to make progress toward well-formed moral virtues? The total answer to such questions would be lengthy and complex, filling many volumes and covering many factors—such as the moral status of one’s community, an adequate cognitive understanding of moral duty, and healthy emotional responses that support moral motivation. However, this project specifically focuses on one aspect of the present concern over virtue in order to contribute to the larger discussion. The particular aspect under study here is temptation and its relation to virtue formation. As we shall see, theories differ in various ways over the relation of temptation to virtue formation—that it is important to, or necessary to, or even somewhat irrelevant to virtue formation.

Historically, the extant theories on the nature of temptation and its exact connection (or lack of connection) to virtue formation display strengths and weaknesses, as we shall see in Chapter 2. The present project works through those well-known theories, explaining what is helpful and what seems mistaken, clarifying key concepts as needed, and continuing to construct the argument that a specific experience needs to be available to us in order to develop moral virtues. More explicitly, this thesis supports the contention that *in order for humans to develop the moral virtues, they need an environment that is conducive to experiencing temptation, whether or not they actually do experience it in any given case*. Stated slightly differently, I aim to defend the following conditional statement: *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then*

¹ David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015), xi-xii.

*the possibility of temptation is necessary.*² In order to substantiate this claim, I will build an account of temptation that is analytically robust—that is well informed by both moral philosophy and moral theology. As it turns out, that account of temptation may be argued to fit within a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethical theory of character formation, an important point which I elaborate and defend in Chapter 5, section 6.

Temptation is an ubiquitous human experience. Every person knows what it is like to want to do something that they also think is problematic for some reason. From mundane and seemingly innocuous examples of being tempted to eat one more piece of cake to more morally weighty examples of being tempted to cheat on one's spouse, we all experience temptation in varying degrees and for a variety of things. Yet, surely there is some difference that is worth careful attention between the temptation to eat cake and the temptation to adultery. Indeed, as this thesis progresses, I explicate the philosophical, moral, and theological aspects of the nature of temptation in order to provide the framework to enhance the attention we will need to give. This careful approach will involve situating the technical moral concept of temptation in reference to two important loci in moral philosophy and moral theology—namely, *akrasia* and moral responsibility. Doing this will help clarify the notion of temptation and work toward substantiating the ultimate claim that the possibility of this experience is necessary for the formation of moral virtues, particularly from a neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue formation, which has long been a major viewpoint in Christian ethics. This project, then, is a constructive work in *Christian ethics* conducted by utilizing the methodology of *analytic moral theology*. A key aim of this thesis is to offer a creative and substantive analysis of the nature of temptation—in interaction with extant alternatives—and to do so through the method of analytic moral theology. With this core notion in hand, the argument can then be advanced to substantiate the emerging conclusion that an environment permissive of this kind of temptation is necessary in order to develop moral virtues.

² Throughout this project I will use “person” to mean both “human person” and “agent.” This has two reasons. First, I want to distinguish human persons from other non-human persons like angels, (possible) aliens, or God. I make no claims as to how or whether non-human persons experience temptation. Second, “agency” describes beings with the capacity to act intentionally (Markus Schlosser, “Agency,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2019 edition), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/agency/>>). As with “person,” agency may describe non-human persons; therefore, in order to limit the discussion to humans, every instance of “person” will mean “human person” unless otherwise explicitly stated.

In many ways, the logic of John Hick’s Irenaean, “soul-making” theodicy is the background framework for the argument of this thesis.³ Indeed, as Hick says, albeit with a different aim in mind but fairly appropriate here:

The value-judgment that is implicitly being invoked here is that one who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created *ab initio* [from the beginning] in a state either of innocence or of virtue.⁴

Hick’s claim here is stronger than my position that develops through this work. Although Hick may be correct that having attained moral character by mastering temptations makes one virtuous in a rich sense, the implication that one *must necessarily* experience temptation in order to attain this rich moral character can be argued to be too strong. Such a strong position goes a step further than the findings I argue for as this study progresses, but the inspiration and very general framework comes from Hick. In particular, his soul-making theodicy posits that two conditions are necessary for humans to reach sainthood or virtue:⁵ (i) free will (sainthood cannot come by “divine fiat”⁶) and (ii) an environment conducive to authentic moral formation. On Hick’s account, in order to become morally (and spiritually) mature persons, human beings need a certain kind of world. We do not need a world that is like a pet’s cage or a hedonist’s paradise—designed to meet every need of survival *and* comfort.⁷ Rather, in a world that can allow virtue, what is necessary is hardship, suffering, injustice, and even temptation since these experiences create moral challenge and can bring forth moral effort.⁸ As the present project develops, increasing substantiation for something in the neighborhood of Hick’s claim emerges. Again, it will be a *weaker* (that is, more qualified) claim than Hick’s because I judge the logic and evidence of the case, all things considered, to support the

³ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010 [originally, 1977]).

⁴ Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 255.

⁵ I take “sainthood” as an abbreviated locution of Hick, who prefers “children of God,” from Daniel Speak, *The Problem of Evil* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 99-102.

⁶ Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 255.

⁷ Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 257.

⁸ Michael Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982), 119; Michael L. Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 94.

claim, not that temptation is strictly *necessary* but only that temptation must be *possible* in order for humans to develop the moral virtues.

This thesis also bears similarity to Michael Brady’s argument in his recent book *Suffering and Virtue*.⁹ Brady contends that in order to develop virtues, suffering is necessary: “suffering of various kinds is necessary for the cultivation and expression of many virtues, both individual and social...”¹⁰ He is careful to add that it is not just any kind of suffering that develops virtue and that suffering is not *sufficient* for cultivating virtue but that humans need experiences of suffering in order to be virtuous. His account also makes generous space for desire in the conception of suffering, and thereby displays similarity between his views and those herein (although Brady and I take different views on the nature of virtue). While I do not think temptation is suffering, although some experiences of temptation may also be experiences of suffering, the structure of the logic of Brady’s argument is parallel in this way to the structure of my argument here.

Mention here of Hick and Brady is to accent the fact that the argument I construct is structurally similar to quite well-known arguments already out there for other conclusions. The structure of my argument is parallel to these others, although the content of my argument is invested with different claims. Thus, this thesis aims to make a constructive contribution to an ongoing conversation about human morality by taking seriously certain classes of everyday experiences that are often morally relevant to the point under discussion—and it does this using a familiar argument approach and pattern.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter I will explicate the operative method of the project in order to clearly set up the argument to unfold in subsequent chapters as the pertinent evidence and reasoning is evaluated. The nomenclature I used for this methodology is “analytic moral theology.” I also then offer a brief outline of the chapters in order to describe the shape of the argument and offer a rationale for the various ethical loci examined as I look deeply into the nature of temptation and its role in virtue formation.

2 What is Analytic Theology?

Analytic moral theology is a new and developing field that has entered the historied landscape of Christian ethics. It finds its impetus and roots in analytic theology, which is itself a rather new and developing approach to Christian theology. Both of these

⁹ Michael S. Brady, *Suffering and Virtue* (New York: OUP, 2018).

¹⁰ Brady, *Suffering and Virtue*, 3.

approaches are characterized by their shared fundamental and distinctive methodology. This project is an argument that participates in this developing field by adopting its pioneering work of applying philosophical disciplines, tools, and insights to issues in moral theology. Grounded as it is in analytic theology, understanding the method of analytic moral theology requires knowing the shared methodological commitments with analytic theology. This section, then, brings forward the founding pillars of the argumentative methodology of the project by exploring the procedural commitments of analytic theology. In order to distinguish “analytic moral theology” as a specific approach to doing Christian ethics, it needs to be located within a larger theological movement: analytic theology.

What precisely is analytic theology? Although the question is straight-forward the answer, in fact, has not been so obvious or simple. Defining what “philosophical theology” or “analytic theology” is has proven to be an uphill task for those theologians and philosophers working in the center of this discipline.¹¹ Michael Rea offers this definition of analytic theology: it “is a matter of approaching *theological topics* with the ambitions of an analytic philosopher and in a style that conforms to the prescriptions distinctive of analytic philosophy.”¹² Roughly, following Michael Rea, Oliver Crisp, and William Abraham, I define analytic theology (in the grounding trajectory that I set in this project) as an approach to systematic theology that is characterized by the tools and input of analytic philosophy of religion—such as the aim for conceptual clarity, argumentative rigor, and overall coherence.¹³ Analytic theology, then, is a methodological approach to doing systematic theology.¹⁴ More needs to be said about analytic theology as a distinct

¹¹ This is one of Andrew Chignell’s points in his essay “The Two (or Three) Cultures of Analytic Theology: A Roundtable,” *JAAR* 81, no. 3 (September 2013): 569-72.

¹² Rea, “Analytic Theology: Précis,” *JAAR* 81, no. 3 (September 2013): 575. Rea is not concerned to make the distinctions that I have here; indeed, he would rather such distinctions between analytic theology and philosophy of religion be blurred rather than made more distinct. He is committed to the idea that analytic philosophy of religion is a legitimate form of theology (“Analytic Theology,” 576).

¹³ Max Baker-Hytch distinguished ‘analytic philosophy of religion,’ as a subspecies of analytic philosophy, from other approaches to philosophy by its historical development (which tracks with the broader category of analytic philosophy), its subject matter, and its methodology; see “Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion: What’s the Difference?” *JAT* 4 (May 2016): 347-61, DOI: <https://journals.tdl.org/jat/index.php/jat/article/download/jat.2016-4.120023010007a/302>.

¹⁴ My definition is closely informed by Abraham’s conception: analytic theology is “systematic theology attuned to the deployment of the skills, resources, and virtues of analytic philosophy. It is the articulation of the central themes of Christian teaching illuminated by the best insights of analytic philosophy” (“Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology,” in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, eds. Michael Rea and Oliver C. Crisp [New York: OUP, 2009], 54). And, Oliver Crisp’s idea that “analytic theology is about redeploying tools already in service of philosophy to a theological end” (“On Analytic Theology,” in *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, eds. Michael Rea and Oliver Crisp [New York: OUP, 2009], 38). Michael Rea thinks Abraham’s (and Crisp’s but for different reasons) definition is too limiting in that some analytic

and powerful methodology—and here the purported difference between general philosophy of religion and analytic theology comes to the fore. Further exploration will also help to locate analytic *moral* theology in the same vein of analytic theology but also distinct from traditional moral philosophy. The following insights that illuminate analytic theology will also serve to illuminate analytic moral theology, given their shared methodological commitments.

2.1 Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion:

A Difference of Sourcing

Analytic theology is different from standard philosophy of religion in that philosophers of religion, in general, tackle questions pertaining to religion using reason as the only authority; they do not necessarily depend on a given religion's sacred texts as normative or authoritative or assumed to contain some truth that must be readily accepted by the philosophical enterprise.¹⁵ Additionally, standard philosophy of religion is not necessarily *Christian* since there is Hindu philosophy of religion, Jewish philosophy of religion, and so forth—although the large bulk of contemporary philosophy of religion publications consists primarily of reflection on the Christian religion per se or its theistic components.¹⁶ Philosophy of religion is a very broad discipline in that it explores the metaphysical framework and epistemology of any given religion in focus.

theologians are not always concerned to connect the topic of discussion to other theological loci, thus, done this way, analytic theology need not be systematic theology (“Analytic Theology: Précis,” 576).

Oliver Crisp argues that analytic theology is a “means of thinking theologically,” and “a particular theological methodology” (“Analytic Theology,” 33). In another essay, Crisp argues that analytic theology is rightly considered systematic theology; see “Analytic Theology as Systematic Theology,” *Open Theology* 3 (2017): 156-66.

Steven Nemes locates analytic theology as “a species within the genus of philosophical theology;” indicating the close relationship but conceptual distinction (“On the Priority of Tradition: An Exercise in Analytic Theology,” *Open Theology* 3 [2017]: 274, DOI 10.1515/opth-2017-0022). There seems to be as many opinions about what analytic theology or philosophical theology is as there are those who seek to do theology in the vein of analytic philosophy. Some have questioned whether analytic theology needs its own category (cf. Eleonore Stump, “The Problem of Evil, Analytic Philosophy, and Narrative,” and Merold Westphal, “Hermeneutics and Holiness,” and Sarah Coakley, “Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Ávia,” all in *Analytic Theology*, eds. Rea and Crisp).

¹⁵ Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion,” 351; see also, Andrew Chignell, “‘As Kant Has Shown’: Analytic Theology and the Critical Philosophy,” in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, eds. Oliver Crisp and Michael C. Rea (New York: OUP, 2009): 119.

¹⁶ This has been the lament of some contemporary philosophers working in philosophy of religion. That is to say, some philosophers have recently pressed their colleagues to do more reflection on religions other than Christianity; see Charles Taliaferro, “Philosophy of Religion,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2019 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/philosophy-religion/>. For a

2.1.1 Ecclesial Sourcing: Scripture and Tradition

Although there is some overlap in topics of interest between philosophy of religion (even analytic style philosophy of religion) and analytic philosophical theology, the key differentiation regards sourcing. Analytic theology, if it is to be Christian, is committed to Christian Scripture as *an* authoritative and necessary source for doing theology.¹⁷ J.

Aaron Simmons's view is characteristic of the distinction to be made:

My basic view is that philosophy and theology should be differentiated along the lines of divergent epistemic appeals to evidence that is taken as immediately legitimate within philosophy and theology, respectively. Specifically, theology can and should appeal to evidence that is not immediately available to philosophy because it is located within determinate communities defined by revelational authorities.¹⁸

In this way, analytic theology seeks to be, to a certain extent, more constrained than general philosophy of religion.¹⁹ Andrew Chignell describes this well:

Philosophy of religion involves arguments about religiously pertinent philosophical issues, of course, but these arguments are customarily constructed in such a way that, ideally, anyone will be able to feel their probative force on the basis of "reason alone." Analytic theology, by contrast, appeals to sources of topics and evidence that go well beyond our collective heritage as rational beings with the standard complement of cognitive faculties.²⁰

Agreeing with Chignell, Max Baker-Hytch notes three activities that analytic theology engages in that, with regard to Scripture, distinguishes it from philosophy of religion: "(i) looking to scripture or ecclesial tradition as a source of topics for investigation; (ii) citing claims made by scripture or ecclesial tradition in order to try to demonstrate what is

philosophy of religion text, written by a Christian, that takes a broader religious approach see Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁷ Scripture alone is not, however, a sufficient source for analytic theology; which distinguishes it from other disciplines in theology, like, perhaps, biblical theology (although even that approach uses sources beyond Scripture); see Oliver Crisp, "Reflections on Scripture's Use in Analytic Theology," contribution to panel discussion of how philosophy informs theology, EPS, November 2017, <https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2019/03/reflections-on-scriptures-use-in-analytic-theology/>.

¹⁸ J. Aaron Simmons, "Living in the Existential Margins: Reflections on the Relationship Between Philosophy and Theology," *Open Theology* 5, no. 1 (2019): 147, <https://doi.org/10.1515/oph-2019-0014>.

¹⁹ Rea, "Analytic Theology," 575.

²⁰ Chignell, "'As Kant Has Shown,'" 119.

entailed by Christian theism; (iii) using a claim asserted by scripture or ecclesial tradition as a premise in an argument.”²¹ Of course, even with analytic theology’s distinct revelational authority, there are ways of approaching a scriptural epistemic appeal that might move it more into the realm of philosophy of religion.²² The point here is not to draw hard and fast lines of separation. Indeed, Simmons makes a reasonable point:

I do not care very much about who is “in” or “out” in relation to philosophy or theology understood as fixed ontological objects, but rather care about what I think *ought to guide disciplinary self- description* in ways that maximize the health of the discourses given where they find themselves internal to their contingent social histories and development.²³

It is toward the goal of self-description that I point out the clear difference between philosophy of religion (even analytic philosophy of religion) and analytic theology—and, further, to locate the context of the argument offered in the following chapters. Yet, there are two other elements of this sourcing distinction that are pertinent to notice before moving forward. That is to say, Scripture is not the only fountainhead of critical reflection that marks analytic theology as different in scope from philosophy of religion.

To pursue this point, Scripture is not the only fountainhead for critical reflection in analytic theology because, first of all, not all theologians accept the idea that Scripture as a primary source is a key point of differentiation of analytic theology from philosophy. For example, Roman Catholics would disagree with this very Protestant and Reformed view, by adding that the teaching Tradition of the church must be considered authoritative.²⁴ Although the nature and function of tradition has varied among Catholic theologians, it still serves as a much greater voice of authority than is often the case in most Protestant theology.²⁵ Indeed, as Steven Nemes sees it, “Of Tradition, Scripture, and (analytic) philosophy, the Tradition of the Church has ultimate priority as analytic-theological source insofar as it reliably mediates the genuine, divinely revealed content of Scripture and justifies the utilization of analytic philosophy for theological

²¹ Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology,” 351.

²² This is Baker-Hytch’s analysis. Depending on how the analytic theologian approaches actions (i)-(iii), will determine how distinct the theologian’s endeavor is from philosophy of religion. Baker-Hytch offers seven possible trajectories (“Analytic Theology,” 354-9).

²³ Simmons, “Living in the Existential Margins,” 148 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Nemes, “On the Priority of Tradition,” 275.

²⁵ Walter J. Burghardt, “The Catholic Conception of Tradition in the Light of Modern Theological Thought,” *CTSA* 6 (2012): 42-75.

purposes.”²⁶ Ecclesial authority need not have such an informing or norming position in philosophy of religion, thus pointing us to further distinction, as described in the next point.²⁷

2.1.2 Philosophical Sourcing: Anglophone Analytic Philosophy

Revelational authorities, whether sacred Scripture or ecclesial tradition, are not the only distinctive sources for analytic theology. There is a separation in which bodies of scholarly literature are operative between analytic theology and general philosophy of religion and these different literatures track with the divergence between *analytic* philosophy and *continental* philosophy.²⁸ Nemes hints towards this divide when he describes analytic theology as contemporary and Anglophone.²⁹ While the analytic approach focuses on Modern (15th—late-19th centuries) to Contemporary (late-19th century—present) periods, with English publications stemming from the United Kingdom and the United States, continental philosophy locates its work in Modern to Contemporary stemming from the “continent” of Europe—generally Western Europe, especially France and Germany. As Neil Levy points out, “each stream develops separately” because “philosophers who belong to each camp read and respond to their fellows almost exclusively.”³⁰ Analytic theology, given its pedigree in analytic

²⁶ Nemes, “On the Priority of Tradition,” 276.

²⁷ To be sure, Tradition need not have such a primary role in theology. This, of course, broaches a debate in theological method that has seen many participants. For a helpful entry into the conversation between Catholic and Reformed thinkers see Michael Horton, “Sola Scriptura: A Dialogue Between Michael Horton and Bryan Cross,” *Modern Reformation*, November/December 2010 (Cross has written a further response not published in *Modern Reformation*; Bryan Cross, “Sola Scriptura: A Dialogue Between Michael Horton and Bryan Cross,” *Called to Communion: Reformation Meets Rome*, 15 November 2010, <http://www.calledtocommunion.com/2010/11/sola-scriptura-a-dialogue-between-michael-horton-and-bryan-cross/>. The debate is not merely between Catholic and Protestant theologians; there are tough biblical questions internal to the sola Scriptura position. See Ben Witherington, “Sola Scriptura and the Reformation: But Which Scripture, and What Translation?” *JETS* 60, no. 4 (Dec 2017): 817-28.

²⁸ On the difference between “analytic philosophy” and “continental philosophy,” see: Neil Levy, “Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences,” *Metaphilosophy* 34, no. 3 (April 2003): 284-304; Dagfinn Føllesdal, “Analytic Philosophy: What It Is and Why Should One Engage in It,” in *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 1-16; Simon Critchley, “What is Continental Philosophy,” *IJPhSt.* 5, no3 (1997): 347-64; David Cooper, “Analytical and Continental Philosophy,” *PAS* 94 (1994): 1-18.

²⁹ Nemes, “On the Priority of Tradition,” 274.

³⁰ Levy, “Analytic and Continental Philosophy,” 284. Levy is clear that this “divide” is not characteristic of all philosophers and that there are philosophers who work in both streams and those who are not easily characterized.

philosophy, does its work in conversation with that stream of scholarship that is primarily in English in both the United Kingdom and the United States.³¹

In summary, a key distinctive of analytic theology is sourcing. On the one hand, as a child of Christian theology it takes Christian scriptures and ecclesial tradition as informing and authoritative. On the other hand, analytic theology as a child of analytic philosophy, appeals to and invests in the philosophical literature that is produced by philosophers in the analytic trajectory found, mostly, in both the United Kingdom and the United States. With this distinction of sourcing in mind, we can further elucidate the operative definition of analytic theology and its hallmarks by exploring the methodological ambitions of an analytic philosopher via his or her rhetorical style—highlighting what Rea calls its distinctive prescriptions—of analytic philosophy.³² Again, this explication of analytic theology is also an explication of analytic moral theology and this serves to highlight the ordering methodology of this project.

2.2 Analytic Theology as Theological Method

2.2.1 Methodological Ambitions

Rea offers two ambitions of analytic philosophy.³³ First, an epistemological ambition: analytic philosophy seeks to answer the question of how far and wide does our epistemology carry us in gaining knowledge about reality; that is, what are the limits and scope of human knowing? Second, a practical ambition: analytic philosophy seeks to provide explanations for non-scientific phenomena. Applied to Christian theology, the two ambitions come to this: to discern the scope and limits of human knowing regarding God as informed by Scripture, ecclesial tradition, the body of didactic reflection, and God's self-revelation in Jesus. Clearly much follows from this but it should suffice to say that part of the ambition of analytic theology is to identify the human capacity to know God and reality in light of God.

³¹ There has been some lamenting of this “divide” and offerings of dual sourced work (Levy laments the “entrenched” differences and suggests some pathways of overcoming this divide; “Analytic and Continental Philosophy”); on this bridge-making approach see J. Aaron Simmons, “On Shared Hopes For (Mashup) Philosophy of Religion: A Reply to Trakakis,” *The Heythrop Journal* LV (2014): 691-710; and “Prophetic Philosophy of Religion,” *Common Ground Journal* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 13-23. For evidence of Anglophone philosophy's insular condition see Eric Schwitsgebel, Linus Ta-Lun Huang, Andrew Higgins, and Ivan Gonzalez-Cabrera, “The Insularity of Anglophone Philosophy: Quantitative Analyses,” *PhPa.* 47, no. 1 (2018): 21-48; <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2018.1429741>.

³² Michael C. Rea, “Introduction,” in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Oliver Crisp & Michael Rea (New York: OUP, 2009), 5, 7.

³³ Rea, “Analytic Theology,” 574.

2.2.2 Methodological-Rhetorical Style

Analytic theology would seek to adopt the second ambition by formulating, explaining, and clarifying theological, and potentially doctrinal, data. It is in view of this second ambition that Rea provides the description of methodological-rhetorical style (or, again, “distinctive prescriptions”).

There are five prescriptions that Rea offers for analytic rhetorical style:

- (1) Write as if philosophical positions and conclusions can be adequately formulated in sentences that can be formalized and logically manipulated.
- (2) Prioritize precision, clarity, and logical coherence.
- (3) Avoid substantive (non-decorative) use of metaphor and other tropes whose semantic content outstrips their propositional content.
- (4) Work as much as possible with well-understood primitive concepts, and concepts that can be analyzed in terms of those.
- (5) Treat conceptual analysis (insofar as it is possible) as a source of evidence.³⁴

Analytic theology seeks to import these stylistic-methodological features into doing theology and it is by incorporating these that this approach to theology acquires the distinctive as “analytic.” It is *analytic* because, like analytic philosophy, this way of doing theology “involves the use of certain tools like logic to make sense of theological issues,” and the rhetorical style of analytic theology will “prize intellectual virtues like clarity, parsimony of expression, and argumentative rigor” as does analytic philosophy.³⁵ Crisp accents one aspect of the style of analytic theology that Rea does not—although, Rea is not opposed to it; that this methodology seeks to break larger problems down into smaller pieces. This follows the analytic philosophical method of analysis “by seeking to understand the composition of its subject matter (or concepts of that subject matter) out of simple (or simpler) components...the method of seeking to understand a subject matter by coming to understand its composition.”³⁶ To Rea’s five prescriptions, we can add a sixth:

³⁴ Rea, “Analytic Theology,” 574.

³⁵ Crisp, “Analytic Theology,” 37-8.

³⁶ Guy Longworth, “Analytic Philosophy,” in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Siobhan Chapman and Christopher Routledge (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2009), 4-5.

- (6) Dissect concepts into their smaller component parts and analyze each for their logical fit into the whole

For example, when working on the problem of three-in-oneness in the Trinity it may prove helpful to examine what a “divine person” is, what “essential” versus “accidental” attributes are, and what “being” is. All of the smaller parts can then be fit together to address the larger problem of consistency. In this process, theology will work much like analytic philosophy in the making of clear and precise distinctions.³⁷

The rhetorical style features are not simple accoutrements of language but actually aim at supporting the second ambition, namely, to provide theological explanations that are true or plausibly true. And while analytic theology wants to do this with linguistic precision, conceptual clarity, and argumentative rigor, it also seeks to do it with consistency and coherence. In this sense, part of the second ambition, conditioned by these rhetorical features, is to be sure that theological statements are consistent and coherent.³⁸

2.2.3 Methodological Consistency and Coherency

There are two kinds of coherency sought. The first is a kind of plausibility of veracity, a self-coherency (is the proposition minimally self-consistent), and the second is a kind of global coherence (does the proposition “hang” with, cohere with other propositions in related domains of discourse). Richard Swinburne clarifies what “coherency” means in the first sense: “A coherent statement is...one that it makes sense to suppose is true; one such that we can conceive of or suppose it and any other statement entailed by it being true; one such that we can understand what it would be like for it and any statement entailed by it to be true.”³⁹ Harry Gensler’s “coherence principle” gives form to the

³⁷ On philosophy as the making of clear and precise distinctions see Robert Sokolowski, “The Method of Philosophy: Making Distinctions,” *RMeta*. 51, no. 3 (Mar 1998): 515-32.

³⁸ This is not to say that other forms of theology, biblical theology, for example, are not committed to being coherent and consistent. Rather, analytic theology with its overt commitment to the use of logic and precision gives special place to coherency and consistency.

³⁹ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. ed. (New York: OUP, 1993), 12-13. On Swinburne’s view statement and proposition are equivalent. Sometimes philosophers prefer proposition over statement as the designators for that which carries the notion that is either true or false. Statements come in many forms of which the basic truth claim is the same; for example, “es regnet” and “it is raining” are the same proposition in different sentences, or statements. I follow Swinburne’s example and use statement and proposition as interchangeable—they both designate the truth claim at the heart of various expressions of that claim.

second kind of coherence, global-coherence: “Other things being equal, we ought to prefer a theory that harmonizes with existing well-established beliefs.”⁴⁰

Coherency, in either plausibility or harmony, does not entail truth, however. That is to say that simply because a proposition, or set of propositions, are coherent does not automatically mean that it is also true. Swinburne gives an example: “the moon is made of green cheese.” Of course, this statement is false but it is not incoherent to suppose that it *could* be true—it is minimally self-consistent. By contrast, a statement that is incoherent is one that we cannot even imagine being true because it is either meaningless or logically inconsistent. For example, “the color nine is late” is meaningless.⁴¹ Numbers are neither the kind of things that can be on time nor have color; as abstract objects, they are candidates for a wholly different discussion about their unique characteristics. In analytic theology we strive to make our theological statements to be coherent, that is meaningful, self-consistent, and, therefore, plausible. More than being plausible, analytic theology works to both investigate and explicate theology so that it is globally consistent, so that it meets Gensler’s coherence principle. In this way, theological propositions should “hang together” in a way that is overall consistent. Those propositions that are held to be true about God are then also coherent with what is held to be true about human destiny, for example.

Ultimately, then, what analytic theology purports to be is a way of doing theology that takes seriously the tools of analytic philosophy—especially logic, precision, clarity, diligent argumentation, consistency and coherency—which when pursued effectively allow for better, more adequate assessments of truth, plausibility, and explanatory power.⁴² We might say that the genius of the analytic approach is using these tools to break large and complex problems into smaller parts and testing these claims for their

⁴⁰ Harry Gensler, *Introduction to Logic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 109.

⁴¹ Swinburne distinguished between a meaningless statement and an incoherent one because there are statements that are incoherent but seem to carry meaning (*Coherence of Theism*, 14). For example, “There is a square root of one.” Unlike my example (which is incoherent and meaningless on Swinburne’s conception) this one does make sense and have meaning, but it is also incoherent because it is not even possibly true.

⁴² There is potentially a third category of discourse that analytic theology avoids, namely, “unclarifiable unclarity” or as Harry Frankfurt put it, “bullshit.” See Harry Frankfurt, “On Bullshit,” *The Raritan Review* 6, no. 2 (1986): 81-100; which has been published in book form, (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2005). Randal Rauser brings Frankfurt’s ideas in that essay into dialogue with analytic theology in the essay, “Theology as a Bull Session,” in *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (op. cit.).

self-consistency and global-coherence.⁴³ It is against this background and foundation that analytic moral theology emerges and engages the project of doing Christian ethics.

3 What is Analytic *Moral* Theology?

The avenue of approach I take in the arguments of this project is “analytic moral theology.” This way of classifying Christian ethics is rather new to the scene of moral theology.⁴⁴ The phrasing may be new but doing Christian ethics in this vein is not altogether new and has a rich expression in Christian moral theology.⁴⁵ The connection to and foundation of analytic theology for this approach to moral theology cannot be underestimated and forms one of the reasons for the methodological exposition of the general character of analytic theology above. A few further observations clarify the more specified method of approach that I employ in the overall project. To be sure, the methodological commitments, methodological ambitions (epistemic and practical), and methodological stylistic prescriptions of analytic theology remain valid and are accommodated to the explicit turn to ethics. Thus, in the first, epistemic, ambition, analytic moral theology seeks to answer how far does our naturally and theologically informed epistemology carry us in gaining knowledge about morality; and in the second, practical ambition, analytic moral theology seeks to provide arguments for, explanations for and of Christian moral commitments.

3.1 Sources of Analytic Moral Theology

Sourcing is much the same as with analytic theology more generally but with more specific attention given to moral philosophy and its related disciplines of philosophy of

⁴³ For Crisp, reason is instrumental in analytic theology (“Analytic Theology,” 41), whereas for Rea reason is not *merely* instrumental, or, at least, that analytic theology per se need not be committed to that idea even if some practitioners are (“Analytic Theology,” 576).

⁴⁴ Indeed, as of this revision (Summer 2020) there is only a single book published explicitly operating within ‘analytic moral theology’: Michael W. Austin, *Humility and Human Flourishing: A Study in Analytic Moral Theology* (New York: OUP, 2018). Cf., Michael W. Austin, “Analytic Moral Theology as Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” EPS, 2012, [https://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/art-Austin%20\(AntalyticMoralTheologyAsChrist-Shaped\).pdf](https://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/art-Austin%20(AntalyticMoralTheologyAsChrist-Shaped).pdf).

⁴⁵ For example, Kent Dunnington, *Humility, Pride, and Christian Virtue Theory*, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (New York: OUP, 2019); Jonathan Kvanvig, *Faith and Humility* (New York: OUP, 2018); Grant Macaskill, *The New Testament and Intellectual Humility* (New York: OUP, 2018); Daniel A. Westberg, *Renewing Moral Theology: Christian Ethics as Action, Character and Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015); William C. Mattison, *The Sermon on the Mount and Moral Theology: A Virtue Perspective* (New York: CUP, 2017); Romanus Cessario, O.P., *Introduction to Moral Theology* (Washington, DC: CUAP, 2001); and the series New Studies in Christian Ethics, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: CUP, 1993-2020).

action and moral psychology than general philosophy of religion. The distinctions between analytic moral theology and analytic moral philosophy parallel the differences between analytic theology and analytic philosophy of religion. The first key distinction noticed there, regarding sourcing, remains: analytic moral theology gives authoritative and normative space to revelational authority and ecclesial tradition in a way that general moral philosophy does not. However, in alignment with analytic moral philosophy, as an *analytic* enterprise, analytic moral theology gives preferential option to those sources in the analytic, Anglophone stream of philosophy instead of those in other streams, such as continental. None of this suggests a value judgment but merely an attempt to locate clearly, and to limit appropriately, the discursive context of the present project.

3.2 Methodological-Rhetorical Style

Just as analytic theology pulls practical insights from philosophy of religion, so analytic moral theology garners methodological practices from moral philosophy. As Michael Austin remarks, “Analytic moral theology, then, involves approaching theological topics where *moral* concerns are central with the ambitions of an analytic philosopher, prizing particular intellectual virtues, and using the analytic style of discourse.”⁴⁶ Baker-Hytch’s observations on this score are especially pertinent since he more clearly captures key elements from moral philosophy’s methods and practice—the analytic style of discourse. These, then, are the sorts of methods used in analytic moral philosophy, which will be important for this project:

thought experiments and intuition pumps; reasoning by analogy; attempting to achieve reflective equilibrium between intuitions and theoretical principles; offering analyses in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions; refining analyses and principles by way of counterexample (also known as ‘Chisholming’); appealing to theoretical devices such as possible worlds and sets...formal languages such as predicate logic and modal logic in order both to state arguments with precision and to examine the consequences of philosophical theories; appealing to explanatory virtues such as simplicity, elegance, and explanatory power as a guide to theory-choice; and where appropriate, appealing to philosophically relevant portions of well-established scientific theories.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Austin, *Humility*, 7.

⁴⁷ Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology,” 348-9. The allusion above is to Roderick Chisholm, who was known for careful but tedious analysis, in which he continued to refine his topic by making small alterations (Richard Feldman and Fred Feldman, “Roderick Chisholm,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2019 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/chisholm/>).

Arguably, the use of thought experiments and intuitions pump is more prominent in moral philosophy, than in philosophy of religion. This will be key to the methodology used in this project.⁴⁸ Thus, in future chapters, some “just so” stories will be employed to help explicate and give concrete handles for the theoretical concepts. “Just so” stories are particularized case studies designed both to alert one’s moral intuition for analytic reflection and to move the argument forward. As in analytic theology, these stories and examples do not replace careful, clear, and consistent argumentation but serve to elucidate the argument. As Rea says concerning metaphor, these rhetorical devices do not supplant the argument and the “semantic content [should not] outstrip the propositional content.”⁴⁹

A core reason that case studies take such prominence in moral philosophy is the endeavor for reflective equilibrium. The method of reflective equilibrium was first described by John Rawls.⁵⁰ This mode of argument

consists in working back and forth among our considered judgments [and intuitions] about particular instances or cases, the principles or rules that we believe govern them, and the theoretical considerations that we believe bear on accepting these considered judgments, principles, or rules, revising any of these elements wherever necessary in order to achieve an acceptable coherence among them.⁵¹

My developing argument follows this methodology closely.

⁴⁸ This is not to suggest that thought experiments are absent in philosophy of religion—far from it (e.g., the importance of possible worlds thought experiments to analytic philosophy of religion is hard to overstate [see, e.g., Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977]; or the valuable role thought experiments have in the literature on the problem of evil would be difficult to miss [see, e.g., Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* [New York: OUP, 2010]). Rather, it is to highlight the seemingly more central role such exercises take in moral philosophy (see Georg Brun, “Thought Experiments in Ethics,” in *The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments*, eds. Michael T. Stuart, Yiftach Fehige, and James Robert Brown [New York: Routledge, 2018], 195-210).

⁴⁹ Rea, “Analytic Theology,” 574.

⁵⁰ Rawls does not claim he is the first to use it. Rather he says he is following in the footsteps of Aristotle among others (see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1971], 20, 48-51).

⁵¹ Norman Daniels, “Reflective Equilibrium,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.

3.3 Methodological Consistency and the Conditions for Moral Rationality

Moreover, the centrality that consistency and coherency have in analytic theology is also key to analytic moral theology. In this way, the current project aims to meet Gensler's standards of logicity and consistency in his conditions for moral rationality.⁵² There are four conditions for being rational in one's moral thinking according to Gensler: (i) consistent, (ii) informed, (iii), imaginative, and (iv), as he says, "a few more things."⁵³ Indeed, I would suggest that these conditions are necessary conditions for any analytic moral theology. That is to say, these four conditions of moral rationality are *required* to be met in order for some ethical examination to qualify as analytic moral theology. A closer but brief look at each of these conditions will further illuminate the methodology of analytic moral theology. Special applied attention will be given to (i) and (ii) as they are more pertinent to the nature of the work done in this thesis. That is, we need not get a more substantial explanation of (i) and (ii), as if more words dedicated to explaining the concepts is what is needed; rather, the attending will come in the form of conforming the argumentation to the demands of these two condition in particular. Thus, the reader should expect that the argument is, as a matter of fact, both consistent and informed.

Consistency in Gensler's view ranges over both one's rationality and one's living. This broad scope incorporates four areas to avoid inconsistency: logicity, ends-means consistency, conscientiousness, and impartiality.⁵⁴ Of these four, the most pertinent to this work is logicity.⁵⁵ Two basic rules typify the analytic demand for logical correctness: (i) "If A and B are logically inconsistent with each other, then don't combine these two: I believe A and I believe B. (ii) If A logically entails B, then don't combine these two: I believe A and I don't believe B."⁵⁶ These rules apply regardless of whether we are talking about internal or self-consistency and self-coherence in a concept,

⁵² Harry Gensler, *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), especially chapters 7-9.

⁵³ Gensler, *Ethics*, 97. Gensler offers a formalized logical version of consistency in Harry J. Gensler, *Symbolic Logic: Classical & Advanced Systems* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1990), 243-7.

⁵⁴ Gensler, *Ethics*, 66.

⁵⁵ We violate ends-means consistency when we "(a) have an end, (b) believe that to fulfill this end [we] need to carry out certain means, and (c) don't carry out the means" (*Ethics*, 69). This particular kind of inconsistency will have a special connection to the account of temptation offered—as succumbing to temptation is a kind of inconsistency. Conscientiousness is a consistency between, actions, resolutions, desires and moral beliefs (*Ethics*, 69); and like ends-means consistency, the account of temptation that I will argue for has particular connection to this kind of consistency. Impartiality is a consistency in moral judgment; it is to make like moral evaluations about like actions without undue regard for the individual doing the acting (*Ethics*, 73). Gensler explains, "I violate impartiality if I make conflicting evaluations about the action that I regard as *exactly similar* or *relevantly similar*" (*Ibid.*)

⁵⁶ Gensler, *Ethics*, 68.

proposition, or argument—or about external consistency and coherence. Thus, for analytic moral theology to apply these criteria for logicality would mean probing a concept’s internal logical relationship and its logical relationship with other important external ethical concepts with which it must comport. In the present study, for example, if it turns out under analysis that temptation is essentially about desires and desires arise outside a person’s control, and control is a necessary feature of moral responsibility, then a view that posits both (a) that temptation is based in desire and desire is outside the control of the person *and* (b) that it is morally culpable would be inconsistent. Thus, the view in question would fail Gensler’s requirement and not meet this project’s standards.

3.4 The Methodology of the Current Project

In summary, then, the *modus operandi* of this thesis, as a work of analytic moral theology, is as follows.

(a) Methodological sourcing: as a work of moral *theology*, the argument will be informed and guided by theological resources including the Bible and church tradition. In terms of Baker-Hyitch’s three activities of analytic theology’s use of the Bible (2.1.1 above),⁵⁷ the unfolding argument will: (i) “look to scripture as a source of topics for investigation”—temptation is an experience noted prominently in the Christian scriptures; for just two very important examples: Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.1-7) and Jesus in both his wilderness experience (Mark 1.12-13; Matthew 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13) and his Gethsemane experience (Matthew 26.36-46); (ii) “citing claims made by scripture or ecclesial tradition in order to try to demonstrate what is entailed by Christian theism”—in this sense, the following argument will both philosophically unpack and substantiate the coherency of the philosophical assumptions and underpinnings of the Bible’s brief testimony on the nature of temptation found in the Letter of James (Chapter 2, section 2.7.3); and (iii) “using a claim asserted by scripture or ecclesial tradition as a premise in an argument”—after briefly exegeting the claims of James regarding the nature of temptation, these claims then become one of the guiding parameters for the philosophical argumentation such that the argument works to both cohere with the biblical claims, to make philosophical sense of

⁵⁷ Baker-Hyitch, “Analytic Theology,” 351. I am narrowing the scope of Baker-Hyitch’s activities to the Bible whereas he includes the Christian tradition. I have no objections to these activities also applying to church tradition but want to note more specifically how the text of scripture will function in my argument.

those claims, and to follow the logical implications of those claims (thus, demonstrating what is entailed by Christian theism). The greater focus of the ensuing argument is not biblical theology but a kind of natural moral theology that seeks to be consistent with biblical data. Regarding the use of church tradition, two endeavors guide the coming argument: first, to appeal to various Christian philosophers and theologians as guides and interlocutors in developing the argument; and, second, to be attentive to and note various important theological intersections between the philosophical case developed and the various loci of systematic theology.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Christian tradition will serve to test my argument in conversation with Thomas Aquinas (Chapter 5, section 6) and the theological loci of Christology (Chapter 5, section 7). In addition, as situated within the stream of analytic *moral philosophy*, I will take seriously content from moral philosophers and particularly those who have done relevant work in philosophy of action, philosophical moral psychology, moral responsibility, and virtue ethics. In this vein, a methodological assumption guides the entire discourse: namely, that important moral concepts must be carefully and philosophically analyzed in order to build a consistent and coherent theology. Thus, the developing argument builds primarily on analyzing work done in moral philosophy in order to construct an account of temptation and moral virtue formation that is both consistent and coherent with biblical-theological data and fertile ground for further theological construction.

(b) Methodological ambition: this approach aims to meet the first of Rea's ambitions for analytic theology but conditioned for moral theology (and further conditioned to the narrow scope of this project); namely, to gain knowledge about virtue formation and the nature and of role of temptation in that process. Furthermore, what is key to analytic moral theology is the assumption that humans have access to moral reality outside of special revelation and that humans are capable of veridical deliberation about that moral reality.⁵⁹

Moreover, practical questions regarding temptation and virtue formation are not

⁵⁸ This notation will take place only sparingly in the text body and further in the footnotes (e.g., in Chapter 4 regarding temptation, culpability, and a theology of sin [section 3.4] and Chapter 5 regarding character formation and the afterlife [section 6]). This is due to the necessary constraints of time/space and argumentative focus.

⁵⁹ Thus, analytic moral theology is related to natural theology. Cf., Andrew Chignell and Derek Pereboom, "Natural Theology and Natural Religion," *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2020 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/natural-theology/>.

the center of focus in this project. Instead, the work here is more tightly focused on a moral theology that is robustly informed by philosophical moral psychology, philosophy of action, and virtue ethics. This is not a denial of the importance of practical aims but to adequately limit the scope of the project.

(c) Methodological-rhetorical style: the method pursued involves these key stylistic elements: clear and consistent argumentation; clarifying important concepts and positions; introducing fine distinctions between important concepts; and identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for the concepts under study. Furthermore, the method here prioritizes propositional content before metaphorical devices or thought experiments/just so stories—and yet uses these semantic devices to provide greater clarity and concreteness to the unfolding argument. Still further, when appropriate, formal analytic philosophical constructions will be used (numbered premises, logical operators, etc.). Under the inspiration of Chisholm and others, this will mean adopting as our convention numbering key propositions that are subject to analysis and argument, such as (1), (2), (3), and so on, and using symbols and variables from predicate logic such as \sim (“not”), \wedge (“and”), \vee (“or”), \rightarrow (“if...then”), and so on. In text enumerations will follow Roman numeral formatting: (i), (ii), (iii), and so on. These numerals will never signify propositions in an argument.

(d) Methodological consistency: evidence offered, conclusions reached, and sources consulted will be tested for consistency and coherency. This will be done first by working to articulate the argument in a way that is philosophically plausible—self-consistent and meaningful. Second, it will be accomplished by interfacing evidence and conclusions of the argument with important and relevantly related moral and theological data to test for global coherency. Together these two aims ensure the project meets Gensler’s first two conditions of moral rationality: (i) logical consistency and (ii) informed. This process works as a way of testing the conceptually internal and disciplinary/global consistency.

3.5 Methodological Objections

There are at least two possible lines of criticism to the foregoing methodological commitments.⁶⁰ The first comes from Sarah Coakley, a systematic theologian and philosopher of religion, who is friendly to analytic theology but has worries about methodological requirements.⁶¹ The second comes from J. Aaron Simmons, postmodern philosopher of religion who is adept with and friendly toward analytic philosophy. In a recently published article, Simmons argues for a stronger methodological divide between the disciplines of theology and philosophy, especially as they are practiced by confessional Christians.⁶² Below I will briefly offer their views as critical objections to my own project and then suggest a trajectory of response to each. As will become clear, Coakley's corrective requires that I add a nuance to the methodological commitments noted in section 3.4 above. However, Simmons's potential objection cannot so easily be incorporated and therefore needs a more considered rejoinder.

Coakley's worry for analytic theology, which applies equally to analytic moral theology, is that those who practice it and those who attempt to delimitate its features might create an exclusive "club" with hard boundaries of who is in and who is out. As she suggests, "I would gently propose that we do not waste *too* much time in the future...trying to nail down precisely what is, and what is not, 'analytic theology'...it would seem more profitable...to speak of us analytic theologians as a 'family resemblance' group who share some, but not all, of a range of overlapping and related goals and aspirations."⁶³ Her contention is that it is "pointless to look for one *essentialist*

⁶⁰ Thomas McCall offers and responds to six objections to analytic theology that are insightful but not narrowed enough to apply to the more focused approach I take here as analytic *moral* theology (*An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015], 24-35). Perhaps the only exception is the criticism that "Analytic theology is an exercise in natural theology" (26). J. Aaron Simmons's potential line of critique captures better this worry because it is more focused and detailed, therefore I respond to his rather than McCall's.

⁶¹ Sarah Coakley, "On Why Analytic Theology Is Not a Club," *JAAR* 81, no. 3 (September 2013): 601-08; and Sarah Coakley, "Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Ávila," in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (New York, OUP, 2009), 280-312.

⁶² J. Aaron Simmons, "Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy: Assessing the Challenges and Envisioning the Opportunities," *Pneuma* 42 (2020): 175-200. Simmons is speaking specifically to "pentecostal philosophy" but he is also making metaphilosophical claims about methodology that explicitly address analytic philosophy and theology. This suggests why his argument is pertinent as a possible objection to the methodology herein.

⁶³ Coakley, "On Why Analytic Theology is Not a Club," 602-3.

definition of our project.”⁶⁴ The reason we ought to avoid any kind of methodological gatekeeping is two-fold. First, as a matter of fact, within the work of various analytic philosopher-theologians there is a breadth of methodology, not all of which is equally coextensive. Second, the division of philosophy into two camps of “analytic” and “continental” is historically recent—“a purely twentieth-century phenomenon.”

The goal according to Coakley, however, is not a forced re-marriage of the estranged partners, but to “learn how to understand each other again and to appreciate the divergent philosophical emphases that have been spawned in the meantime.”⁶⁵ This is surely laudable, and I take it as a needed refinement and nuance to my methodological commitments. Thus, the methodology of the current project, as outlined in section 3.4 above, is not intended as a litmus test of what any analytic moral theology must be in order to be rightly so called. While I do think that any analytic moral theology will have a “family resemblance” to some of the commitment noted in this chapter, I must agree that the family is quite large and there is room for a variety of appearance and, therefore, other iterations of analytic moral theology may leave out or add in various rhetorical elements and appeal to sourcing that goes beyond analytic staples; for example, Continental, French, or German sources.

J. Aaron Simmons’s type of objection will not allow for such an easy accommodation. Simmons’s argument has some affinity with Coakley’s above in that there should be room for methodological diversity within in any particular philosophical or theological endeavor. Yet, his contention goes further than Coakley to suggest that “Christian philosophy can and...*should* be more methodologically diverse and may become even more compelling when viewed as decidedly *philosophical* and not simply a different mode of philosophical *theology*.”⁶⁶ A core problem in certain modes of philosophical theology, according to Simmons, is the incorporation of theological authorities into the philosophical discourse such that the lines between philosophy and theology become very nearly erased.⁶⁷ From this faulty foundation, this mode of philosophical theology then treats every audience as a confessional audience thus confusing the needed distinction between the academy and the church. The result here is

⁶⁴ Coakley, “On Why Analytic Theology is Not a Club,” 603.

⁶⁵ Coakley, “On Why Analytic Theology is Not a Club,” 604.

⁶⁶ Simmons, ““Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy,” 178.

⁶⁷ Simmons, ““Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy,” 177; 195-6.

that most often theology overtakes philosophy and this can lead to a kind of Christian triumphalism and professional estrangement to otherwise friendly interlocutors (for example, those philosophers who are not confessionally committed and therefore do not share acceptance of theological sources).⁶⁸ The worry for this project, then, is that analytic theology reduces philosophy to theology and does “philosophy” for only one audience: “philosophy and theology are more effectively considered together when we do not reduce philosophy to theology, but instead allow both to resound as individually contributing to the integration of the life of the mind and the life of faith...Far too much Christian philosophy is simply confessional theology that appropriates philosophy for its own aims.”⁶⁹ To be fair, Simmons’s is not overtly critiquing analytic theology, his sights are elsewhere, but his metaphilosophical and methodological concerns fairly apply to the approach I have outlined above, especially in section 3.4.

There is a legitimate danger in reducing philosophy to theology in any philosophical theology project. Further, it is reasonable that such a reduction could unnecessarily and inhospitably alienate dialogue partners who are not confessionally committed to the theological sourcing. Yet, analytic theology that is committed to authoritative grounding in theological sourcing does not necessarily entail reducing philosophy to theology and neither does it necessarily entail estrangement even when theological sourcing is offered as evidence in non-confessional, academic settings. To be sure, one of the endeavors of philosophy is to offer arguments in the hopes that those who hear them will be convinced by them and that requires building arguments upon premises that are themselves more likely to be accepted than not. To this end, reducing philosophy to theology where theological sourcing is not accepted will fail to meet one of the endeavors of philosophy. However, philosophers also offer arguments as wholly conditional; for example: “assume P; if P, then Q...”⁷⁰ If P in this putative argument is built on theological sourcing, non-Christian philosophers can still analyze whether Q follows from P and whether P or Q are self-consistent or globally coherent. And this is possible regardless of the truth value of P or whether P is a compelling premise. If that is

⁶⁸ Simmons, ““Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy,” 196.

⁶⁹ Simmons, ““Prospects for Pentecostal Philosophy,” 196.

⁷⁰ Timothy Pawl makes this kind of argument in his book on Christology. He does not defend the theological confessions of the councils on the nature of Christ but assumes them and argues for their internal coherency (see *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* [New York, OUP, 2016]). Secular philosopher can assess Pawl’s argument on its merits without necessarily feeling ostracized by the theological assumptions.

correct, then this suggests that Simmons's objection need not necessarily apply to either the methodology of this project or to the audience of this thesis. That said, in what follows, I will utilize theological sourcing—both biblical and theological—in order to give both a starting place for the argument and to provide its most general guiding parameters. In order to not reduce philosophy to theology, the argument should be able to “stand on its own two feet” for those non-Christian philosophers who do not accept theological sources as authoritative; and for those Christian philosophers and theologians, the argument should resonate and hold consistent with their acceptance of theological sources as authoritative (to be sure, without my presuming their immediate agreement with my interpretation of those sources).

The objections can be simplified in this way: first, the methodological commitments too quickly and narrowly constraint what it means to do analytic moral theology; and second, analytic moral theology, in its use of biblical-theological sources as a starting place and argumentative parameter, unduly reduces philosophy to theology thus undermining the discipline of philosophy and estranging valuable dialogue partners who do not accept the authority of biblical-theological sources. In response, I have argued against the first objection by allowing that analytic theology is a methodology of “family resemblance”—there is room for a variety methodological expressions and commitments and this project is simply one member of the family. Thus, the methodology of section 3.4 above is not a litmus test of membership in a parochial club. The second objection does not undermine the methodological commitments because there is no actual reduction of philosophy to theology since the biblical-theological sourcing is vitally informative without being dogmatically or obstinately necessary: non-Christian philosophers can putatively accept the theological sources and evaluate the argument on its philosophical merits. With these worries addressed, I can now turn to outlining the coming argument.

4 Outline of the Argument

To indicate how the initial problem and methodology of this thesis naturally transitions to the unfolding investigation, Chapter 2 offers a review of literature on temptation. Although in the literature this particular very important moral topic has been addressed directly only occasionally, a large number of influential philosophers and theologians have made relevant contributions to the problem area, providing an intellectually rich body of work that this project engages. Chapter 2 also gives serious consideration to

biblical data, utilizing a measure of exegetical theology, because of its influence on moral theology.

In Chapter 3, I argue for a constructive account of temptation that emerges from critical interaction with the extant literature and positions. The central concept of temptation that I work with is given the following technical definition:

(T)_{=def.} Temptation is an internal psychic conflict whereby a temptee, TE, desires some state of affairs, which state of affairs or the desire for the state of affairs the TE judges to be bad, and simultaneously the TE has some other psychic state that conflicts with the obtaining of or desire for the bad state of affairs and which state is seen as morally superior.

This conception of temptation, (T), trades on important information drawn from my review and assessment of the literature and seeks to be consonant with data from Scripture. The account I develop, then, is a constructive and corrective synthesis of the common (somewhat consensual) threads of thought in this area.

The more elaborate account of temptation to follow identifies five necessary conditions for (T) with each being examined and defended against potential objections. Throughout its treatment, Chapter 3 seeks to be deeply informed by analytic moral philosophy and especially philosophical moral psychology and philosophy of action.

Chapter 4 takes up the important task of comparing (T) to *akrasia* or weakness of will, which is a closely related experience in moral psychology. That chapter elucidates and defends the claim that temptation is not the same as *akrasia* or weakness of will but that the two concepts are tightly connected.

The connection between *akrasia* and moral responsibility was famously discussed by Aristotle and has received considerable attention in moral philosophy. Thus, Chapter 4 also contextualizes the account of (T) offered by this project in a larger historical conversation. This contextualization sets the stage for the Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethical framework I develop for my account of temptation and moves the project toward its main conclusion: that the possibility of temptation is necessary for authentic virtue formation to occur.

Chapter 5 culminates the project and defends the claim that, in order to inculcate moral virtues, temptation must be possible. Put differently, developing virtue requires an atmosphere where temptation is a live possibility. In this chapter, I am careful to explain why the virtue ethical framework makes most sense of the emerging account of temptation as opposed to some other normative ethical framework. Important

background orientations are drawn from both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, particularly Aristotle's emphases on rational desire's role in virtue, his basic conception of virtue and how virtues are habituated, and Thomas's contribution of infused virtue. Interestingly, the end result currently would be labeled Neo-Aristotelian, rather than purely Aristotelian, because it emanates from the analytic trajectory of moral philosophy and theology.

Finally, Chapter 6, pulls together the conclusion of my overall argument, summarizing the intermediate arguments for important points along the way. The mounting argument, then, will be seen to strongly support the thesis that moral virtue habituation requires an environment that allows the experience of temptation to arise—that it is necessary to virtue that temptation be possible. In highlighting this conclusion at the end, further avenues of exploration in both moral philosophy and moral theology become obvious but lie beyond the scope of this study.

Chapter 2: Mapping the Concept of Temptation: An Appraisal of the Extant Literature

1 Introduction

Casey is in her third hour of marking end of term papers; grades are due tomorrow, and she is nearly finished. She sincerely wants to finish marking the last few papers but also would really like to take a break, have a glass of wine, and sit with her favorite fiction book. She is torn: the papers really need finishing, but the mental break and relaxation are very enticing. "I'm tempted to just quit and relax!" she exclaims.

An experience like Casey's is standard fare for most people. Indeed, it would seem that nearly all people have had a sufficiently similar experience. For a phenomenon that is ubiquitous, it is odd that there should be a paucity of robust and developed analytical philosophical-theological reflection on it, yet this is the status of temptation.¹ Something that is known to be common in human life deserves careful reflection, but the fact that so little has been engaged on temptation readily raises important questions. For example, why is temptation universal? Is it a negative or positive factor in human life? When is temptation morally significant, as opposed to morally irrelevant? What is its exact role from the perspective of moral theory? Do different moral frameworks, which are advanced in the extant literature, entail different accounts of temptation? Given the relative lack of literature on temptation in relation to morality, what general account of morality makes best sense of the experience of temptation? Working through questions

¹ Temptation has seen very little treatment in the literatures of analytic moral philosophy and moral theology. This is not the case, however, concerning *akrasia* (weakness of will), which receives considerable reflection in philosophical circles. In chapter 3 I investigate the relationship between these two concepts.

The topic of temptation is discussed in psychology and economics. I do not appeal to these literatures for two reasons. First, they do not offer any analysis of temptation itself. Even the most cited sources do not analytically examine the nature of temptation but seem to work with a standard dictionary definition. Second, the aim of these resources is empirical. This data is interesting and useful in advertising, marketing, and counseling but not informative for analytic moral accounting. See Y. Trope & A. Fishbach, "Counteractive Self-Control in Overcoming Temptation," *JPSP* 79, no. 4 (200): 493–506, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.4.493>; Roy F. Baumeister, "Yielding to Temptation: Self-Control Failure, Impulsive Purchasing, and Consumer Behavior," *JCR* 28, no. 4 (March 2002): 670–676, <https://doi.org/10.1086/338209>; Frank Gul and Wolfgang Pesendorfer, "Temptation and Self-Control," *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 69, no. 6 (December 2003): 1403–1435, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0262.00252>; A. Fishbach, R. S. Friedman, and A. W. Kruglanski, "Leading Us Not Into Temptation: Momentary allurements elicit overriding goal activation," *JPSP* 84, no. 2 (2003): 296–309, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.296>; and Francesca Gino, Maurice E. Schweitzer, and Nicole L. Mead, et al., "Unable to Resist Temptation: How Self-Control Depletion Promotes Unethical Behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 115, no. 2 (July 2011): 191–203.

such as these will be key to our investigation—and the emerging argument for what seems the most reasonable and best-supported account of morality in relation to temptation will constitute an important contribution to this scholarly area.

1.1 Analytic Methodology and Appraisal of Extant Literature

The aim of this chapter is to rigorously evaluate how important thinkers have conceived of the nature of temptation. Central to the methodology of this project as analytic moral theology, is the analytic practice of breaking down complex propositions into their constituent parts and subjecting those parts to close philosophical examination for clarity, precision, consistency, and coherency.² While there is not a vast literature attempting to make precise the notion of temptation, what there is will inform the account constructed in this project. This process of analysis is necessarily careful, attentive, and thorough. It involves faithfully and precisely extracting the pertinent components for which previous thinkers have argued for and subjecting them to critical examination. On the one hand, then, this will require close attention to the details of the ideas proffered by previous thinkers. And, on the other hand, it will then involve evaluating those ideas for their conceptual clarity, consistency, and coherency. Thus, in what follows I will adopt the methodology of “Chisholming” described in Chapter 1, section 3.2—“repeated refining analysis and principles by way of counterexamples” including very close attention to the words and ideas proposed by the informing thinkers and the use of number propositions.³

The current chapter serves two purposes: first, to examine critically the different accounts of temptation available. This will prepare for Chapter 3 and the constructive development of a distinctively analytic account of temptation that is grounded in, yet builds beyond, common agreement with insights from the thinkers below. Second, having done this, Chapter 2 will, in conjunction with Chapter 3, prepare the way to make the argument of Chapter 4 that the experience of temptation is not the same as *akrasia* or weakness of will but that the two are related. Both the argument and analysis of Chapters 3 and 4 serve as a creative contribution to the literature of moral philosophy in the area of *akrasia*/weakness of will, which has often assumed the two to be synonymous. This will explicitly locate the place of temptation in moral philosophy/theology. Finally, the

² Guy Longworth, “Analytic Philosophy,” in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Siobhan Chapman and Christopher Routledge (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 4-5; Robert Sokolowski, “The Method of Philosophy: Making Distinctions,” *RMeta*. 51, no. 3 (Mar 1998): 515-32.

³ Max Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion: What’s the Difference?” *JAT* 4 (May 2016): 348.

current analysis, coupled with the arguments from Chapters 3 and 4, sets the stage for Chapter 5 which develops the culminating argument regarding temptation's role in virtue formation (namely, if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary).

1.2 The Common Definition of Temptation

What, then, is temptation? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a basic and common definition of temptation, is “to test,” or “to try.”⁴ We should also include the idea of enticing or alluring someone with something.⁵ However, deep analysis reveals the complex and sometimes elusive elements of temptation beyond the common definition.

2 Informing Voices

Toward the goal of doing deep analysis, I will engage seven thinkers who have explicitly developed positions on what temptation is: John Owen, J.P. Day, A.T. Nuyen, John McKinley Paul M. Hughes, Brian Leftow, and Adam Pelsler.⁶ To be sure, other Christian theologians have discussed temptation but not with any attempt to explicate the nature of temptation per se; or they have connected temptation to *akrasia*/weakness of will. Thus, I have limited my attention here to those thinkers who have given focused attention to the nature of the experience of temptation and I will treat *akrasia*/weakness of will and its relation to temptation in Chapter 4. In what follows I shall examine the philosophical nuances of temptation noted by these thinkers, with an eye toward explicating the *nature* of temptation. This foundation will be further augmented and shaped by a consideration of the pertinent biblical data on temptation.

⁴ “tempt,” *OED*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198973?rskey=PF9CIV&result=2&isadvanced=false#eid>, accessed 23 August 2015.

⁵ “tempt,” *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/tempt>, accessed 23 August 2015.

⁶ John Owen, *Of Temptation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, [original 1658]), PDF version, online: <https://ccel.org/ccel/o/owen/temptation/cache/temptation.pdf>; J.P. Day, “Temptation,” *APhQ*.30, no. 2 (1993): 175-81; A.T. Nuyen, “The Nature of Temptation,” *SJP* 35 (1997): 91-103; John McKinley, *Tempted for Us: Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ's Impeccability and Temptation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009); Paul M. Hughes, “The Logic of Temptation,” *Philosophia* 29 (2002): 89-110; Brian Leftow, “Tempting God,” *FPh*. 31, no. 1 (2014): 3-23; Adam Pelsler, “Temptation, Virtue, and the Character of Christ,” *FPh* 36, no. 1 (January 2019): 81-101.

2.1 John Owen's Of Temptation

Perhaps one of the earliest attempts to explicate a careful account of temptation comes to us from John Owen. A seventeenth-century English Puritan, Owen was a careful theologian who taught and administrated at Christ Church, Oxford (1651-59) and wrote a number of theological treatises. One of those writings, *Of Temptation*, includes a brief investigation of temptation with a longer treatment on how to prevent and overcome temptation. While his account is both short and non-analytic, it is still instructive for building a robust description of temptation. It is clear that his aim is not overtly analytic moral theology. Although he does seek to clearly elucidate and argue for his points, his dominant aims are expository and pastoral. In fact, over half of the text is dedicated to exhortation for preventing, enduring, and overcoming temptation.

2.1.1 Testing Versus Temptation

Owen takes his cue from Christ's admonition recorded in Matthew's Gospel: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (26.41 NIV). Owen notices that there are two ways in which "temptation" can be used—one way that indicates the "general nature" of temptation and another that shows its "special nature."⁷ He briefly proposes the general nature of temptation to be amoral ("things indifferent") and states that this kind is best understood as "to try/test" or, as he says, "to search."⁸ God does this kind of tempting and we have a duty to "tempt" ourselves in this way, according to Owen.⁹ This brief treatment is followed by his discussion on the special nature of temptation.

The special nature of temptation, which occupies most of his attention, has moral import—it "denotes any evil."¹⁰ As James 1.13 indicates, Owen argues, this is the type of temptation that God does not do. It comes in degrees and two kinds: active and passive.¹¹ The active special nature of temptation *leads* to evil and may involve an outside tempter or not, or some combination of both.¹² The passive special nature of temptation is that

⁷ Owen, *Of Temptation*, 7 (all page references are to the PDF version found online: <https://ccel.org/ccel/o/owen/temptation/cache/temptation.pdf>; the PDF notates the pagination of the 1658 original).

⁸ Owen, *Temptation*, 7.

⁹ Owen, *Temptation*, 8-9.

¹⁰ Owen, *Temptation*, 9.

¹¹ Owen, *Temptation*, 7, 11.

¹² Owen, *Temptation*, 7, 10.

which *has* evil in it, which he says is the kind of temptation that is understood as affliction.

2.1.2 *Temptation as Seduction from Obedience to God*

After some introductory comments and clarifications, Owen offers the following definition of temptation:

Temptation, then, in general, is *any state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, hath a force or efficacy to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever.*

In particular, that is a temptation to any man which causes or occasions him to sin, or in any thing to go off from his duty, either by *bringing* evil into his heart, or *drawing* out that evil that is in his heart, or in any way diverting him from communion with God, and that constant, equal, universal obedience, in matter and manner, that is required of him.¹³

From this definition, and his later discussion, we can derive insights to build a concept of temptation. First, Owen’s account includes both rational and affectional elements, described here and elsewhere in his writings as necessarily involving both mental and “heart” aspects.¹⁴ Second, temptation is a conflict between a seduction (when it comes from without) or lust (when it comes from within) and some other moral-theological commitment. Third, given his Christian commitments, temptation is cast in explicit theological terms (obedience to God)¹⁵ and therefore does not have the same general scope as the other accounts considered below. Although none of the other authors considered in this review reference Owen, there is clear common ground between them, and his few basic insights will prove instructive to the account offered in the next chapter.

2.1.3 *Evaluation of John Owen*

First, Owen does not offer us any explicit argument for his account of temptation, but a charitable reading suggests his pathway—which pathway will be instructive for the forthcoming account. Of initial importance is Owen’s distinction between testing and temptation. Noting that these are both two different experiences in human life and

¹³ Owen, *Of Temptation*, 10 (emphasis original).

¹⁴ Owen, *Of Temptation*, 12, 15, 18, 22, 25, 31, 44, and 53.

¹⁵ Owen, *Of Temptation*, 10, 11, 17, 30, 31, 34, and 36.

different conceptions in Christian scripture is the beginning of precise analysis. In agreement with Owen, this point will be noticed again below in Section 2.8 and will serve to ground the account argued for in Chapter 3.

Second, Owen's method of examining human experience as a starting point for moral reflection is mirrored in and key to contemporary moral philosophy.¹⁶ Thus, while we might press for more exact articulation of how he gets to his conception of temptation, he is operating in a way that is considered a fair method in moral philosophy. Even without concerted argumentation, Owen has provided a conceptual framework that will factor into the synthetic analysis in Chapter 3.

A key problem with Owen's account is that there is not enough precise description of the moral psychology or phenomenology of temptation. As it stands, temptation could be any psychological condition or experience so long as the condition or experience works towards disobedience. For example: if, under effective hypnosis, John Owen is led to curse those who have cursed him (thus, disobeying Jesus's command to "bless those who curse you" [Luke 6.28 NIV; cf. Rom 12.14]), then Owen will have succumbed to temptation. This is true because temptation is, according to Owen, whatever draws a person's heart or mind away from obedience to God. Clearly, this will give too wide a scope to the definition of temptation and therefore needs more refinement. Furthermore, Owen's definition of temptation has built into it the idea that one will succumb, leaving little room for examination of the *experience* of temptation before or without succumbing to it. Of course, I analyze with caution, not anachronistically blaming Owen for lacking a type of analysis that simply is not present in his historical moment. Yet, helpful as his account is, much more is needed.

2.2 J.P. Day: Temptation is an Immoral, Disguised, and Manipulative Offer

J.P. Day offers the first serious analytic account of temptation that we find in the philosophical literature. As such, it bears careful and close inspection and therefore will necessarily be more thorough than the inspection and insights from John Owen. In keeping with analytic methodology, I will first extract Day's relevant conceptions, ensuring to take them in their best and fairest iteration, and then evaluate them for

¹⁶ On the role of thought experiments, intuition pumps, and experience in moral philosophy see, James Robert Brown and Yiftach Fehige, "Thought Experiments," *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2019 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/thought-experiment/>; and Daniel C. Dennett, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 2013).

consistency and coherency. Only after knowing what Day is saying can he be seriously evaluated in order to determine if his views cohere with our best reflective moral frameworks. This method of extraction and examination exemplifies the “reflective equilibrium” approach noted in Chapter 1, section 3.2, and is a process that is slow, attentive, and careful.¹⁷ The points gained by this exegesis and evaluation will serve two ends: (i) it will help build the argument for the constructive account of temptation (offered in primitive form in Section 3 below and argued for and defended in Chapter 3) and (ii) it will set up questions, the answers to which will serve as evidence for the ultimate aim of defending the conclusion that the possibility of experiencing temptation is necessary in order to develop moral virtue.

Day begins by noting the etymological origins of “temptation” in Latin (*tentare* or *temptare*) which is why the English language suggests the idea of testing and trying. However, Day sees this as the older meaning; the more contemporary meaning he suggests is, roughly, “to offer-to.”¹⁸ According to his construction, temptation is a “success verb”: to be tempted to do X entails one did X.¹⁹

A paradigm example in the New Testament exemplifies the meaning more clearly for Day. When Jesus encounters Satan in the wilderness, Satan *offers* to Jesus universal dominion (cf. Matt 4.1-11). For Day, this example highlights the nature of temptation: “a tempter (TR) tempts a temptee (TE) by offering TE something which (TR believes) will please TE,” but (presumably) TE has reasons against desiring.²⁰ The attentive reader will notice several things according to Day: first, strictly speaking Jesus is not tempted since the “temptation” was not successful, and second that Satan does more than merely offer something to Jesus—Satan also attempts to compel Jesus. Therefore, Day’s conception of temptation includes offering and compulsion. In order to be tempted, then, these conditions need to be met:

- (1) TR offers something, X, to TE
- (2) TR believes X will please TE

¹⁷ Norman Daniels, “Reflective Equilibrium,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.

¹⁸ Day, “Temptation,” 175. It is a “rough” definition because, as Day notes, there are some important distinctions between temptation and offering. What is interesting about Day’s “contemporary” definition of tempting as offering (distinction noted) is that his rendering is not found in any of the major dictionaries I consulted (e.g., *Merriam-Webster*, *OED*, *Cambridge Dictionary* (Online), or *Macmillan Dictionary*). It is unclear where Day gets this peculiar definition.

¹⁹ Day, “Temptation,” 176.

²⁰ Day, “Temptation,” 175-6.

- (3) X is immoral
- (4) TE both desires X and has something against X
- (5) TE accepts the offer (succumbs to temptation)²¹

2.2.1 *Temptation as a Peculiar Offer*

In defense of his conceptual construction, Day spends the remainder of his essay clarifying what “temptation as offer” means. “All tempting involves offering, but not conversely,” says Day.²² Thus, temptations are not *mere* offers but offers of a peculiar kind (Day does not use “mere offer;” I add “mere” in order to highlight more clearly the difference). He offers a handful of differences between “temptation as offer” and mere offers that serve to elucidate his account. The offers fundamental to temptation are conditional. In the Jesus example, Satan offers to Jesus political dominion on the condition that Jesus turn from God. Mere offers, however, can be unconditional: for example, a teaching assistant offering to tutor a student unconditionally. Temptation is not only conditional but it is also disguised and manipulation. These two points highlight Day’s argument that temptation is always immoral. Since it is always immoral, temptation needs to be disguised and the TR has to manipulate the TE. Mere offers, however, are not always immoral and certainly are not disguised—how could an offer be *an offer* if it is disguised? Neither, though, are mere offers manipulations and this owes to the fact that mere offers are not always immoral, unlike temptations.²³ As Day argues, in order to get someone to do something that they have an internal conflict with it and that it is immoral requires manipulation: attempting to elicit desire in the TE. Thus, on Day’s account, temptation involves exploiting weakness in the TE.²⁴ Even more, the TR attempts to bring about an automatic, instinctual, non-deliberative reaction to the temptation, and, so, compels the TE: “A TR *compels* [or *makes/causes*] TE to do X when and only when the temptation is irresistible.”²⁵ Mere offerers, however, simply *induce* toward action and elicit *deliberative* action from the “offeree.” In sum, J.P. Day defines temptation as a peculiar kind of “offer-to,” and distinguishes that from mere offering by

²¹ As described in Chapter 1, section 3.3.4, part of the methodology of this project is using the philosophical convention of numbering conditions, premises, and propositions that are under analysis. In order to retain clarity, all propositions will be number sequentially and not start anew with a new set. Thus, for example, J.P. Day will be (1)-(5), A.T. Nuyen will be (6)-(8), McKinley will be (9)-(12), and so on.

²² Day, “Temptation,” 176.

²³ Day, “Temptation,” 177.

²⁴ Day, “Temptation,” 177.

²⁵ Day, “Temptation,” 177; Day uses “compel,” “make,” and “cause” interchangeably.

arguing that temptation is always immoral and involves a condition, deception, manipulation, and compulsion (which is not always successful).

2.2.2 Evaluation of J.P. Day's *Temptation as a Peculiar Offer*

Day asserts that “tempt” is a “success-verb” and this means that, when correctly used, “tempt” means that the TE has initiated action to obtain X or has obtained X.²⁶ In this sense, “temptation” will have to mean “succumbed to temptation.” Yet, this is problematic since on this view intuitive cases of temptation will turn out not to be temptation at all, if they are resisted.²⁷ For example, Day’s own paradigmatic example, Jesus’s wilderness temptation, is not temptation at all—one wonders how it could be paradigmatic at all. Indeed, this would mean that there is no such category as “temptation resisted,” rather some other concept is needed to range semantically over those experiences. That this runs strongly against intuition is not enough to show that Day’s concept is necessarily incoherent but, in the least, it does show that he needs to do more arguing rather than merely assert that “tempt” is a “success-verb.”

Regarding Day’s definition of temptation as “offering,” it is unclear why this notion finds such a key position. This is puzzling for at least two reasons. First, Day offers no actual argument that temptation is an offer. He merely begins with the example of Jesus’s temptation as a paradigm example (he also passingly mentions the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent). But this is hardly an argument and, moreover, it is a troublesome place to begin because, as I argue below (section 2.6.1), Jesus’s wilderness temptation is not paradigmatic for standard and typical human temptation. Second, his use of “offer” is puzzling because Day provides no clear similarities between tempting and offering. The differentiation does not substantiate how temptation *is* an offer. Indeed, what seems to be essential characteristics of temptation (for example, disguised, necessary immorality, and causation) are logical complements of the essential characteristics of offering (for example, undisguised, necessarily moral/amoral, non-coercive). The implicit structure of a single example of temptation seems to be the only substantiation that “tempting” and “offering” are similar (and it appears that Day wants

²⁶ Day, “Temptation,” 176.

²⁷ P.M. Hughes, “Temptation and the Manipulation of Desire,” *JVI* 33 (1999): 375-6.

to say the two are more than merely similar).²⁸ This assumed structure poses a sincere problem for coherency.

According to Day, temptation has four components: a tempter, a tempte, an object of temptation, and some conditional “if...then...” offer. On his construal, temptation *requires* a tempter. One of the necessary conditions for temptation, then, is the presence of a tempter. This is not clearly spelled out by Day but given his articulation of temptation as offering, the condition that a tempter is necessary is entailed. However, this conception of temptation does not have enough scope—it leaves out intuitive cases of temptation.²⁹ As A.T. Nuyen argues against Day, there are instances of temptation that are simpler than Day’s account allows yet are still legitimate cases of temptation.³⁰ For example, a simpler instance would be coming across a dropped wallet and wanting to take it for one’s own.³¹ Here there is a TE (the pedestrian) and an object of temptation (the wallet) but neither a tempter nor a conditional. Thus, a tempter is not always needed, and, therefore, the presence of a tempter cannot be a necessary condition of temptation; and furthermore, the requirement of a conditional is also mistaken. Given this, it is even less clear how temptation and offering are similar. To be sure, it is not the case that Day is contending that temptation and offering are identical, but he does wish to conclude that they are similar in a such a way that one (offering) defines the other (tempting). Unfortunately, his essay does not give the reader good reason to accept his definition. In this vein perhaps he would be better off replacing “offer” with “entice.” Then it would at least be in line with most dictionaries but, more importantly, “entice” could fill the gaps left by “offer” and not fall to the criticisms I have outlined. Furthermore, the distinctions he does provide raise troubling questions for his novel definition.

So far, then, the account of temptation that I develop will have to reject both temptation as a success-verb and “temptation as offer” since both have sincere conceptual problems and, thus, are incoherent. I argue in the following two sections that two of Day’s arguments regarding temptation are also troubled: namely, the immorality of temptation and the relation of temptation to compulsion.

²⁸ Paul Hoffman also connects offering to temptation but in a weaker facing. Hoffman says of temptation that “at least some temptations are a subclass of offers” (“Aquinas on Threats and Temptations,” *PacPh.* 86, no. 2 (2005): 225.

²⁹ Hughes, “Temptation and the Manipulation of Desire,” 373.

³⁰ Nuyen, “Temptation,” 92.

³¹ This is an example that Leftow uses in explicating his structure of temptation but does so without reference to Day; cf. Leftow, “Tempting God,” 5-7.

2.2.3 *Temptation is Always Immoral?*

At least twice, Day asserts that all temptation is always immoral.³² My argument here is not to question the veracity of Day's conclusion per se, but to suggest that his argument does not have the currency to purchase its conclusion.³³

There is little indication in Day's argument that there is a necessary connection between immorality and temptation such that temptation is a sufficient condition for immorality. To be sure, an assertion that this connection obtains is offered but nothing more than this. It is Day's view that *by its very definition* temptation is immoral.³⁴ However, this is considerably odd since he defines temptation as "to offer-to," and, as he notes, an offer is *not* necessarily immoral. Indeed, if an amoral or permissible offer is described as a temptation, this is not "a serious use of 'tempt.'"³⁵ Ultimately, we may agree with Day that temptation is always immoral, however his argument has not given us good reason to do so. Were Day to clarify immorality perhaps then the connection would be more obvious or acceptable.³⁶ For example, by "immoral" does he simply mean bad or impermissible, or does he mean bad *and* blameworthy? This distinction matters, since it is possible that temptation is always immoral but not always blameworthy, a broader and more conservative claim. However, he could mean that temptation is both always immoral and always blameworthy and this is a narrower, stronger, and much more contentious claim.

2.2.4 *Temptation and Compulsion*

Conceptual clarity is lacking in Day's argument for compulsion in temptation. On the one hand, Day argues that sometimes a tempter "*compels (or makes)*" a TE do X.³⁷ But, on the other hand, the compulsion of temptation is tied to the arousal of irresistible

³² Day, "Temptation," 176, 177.

³³ In fact, I will argue that all temptations are morally dubious even if not all temptations are morally culpable. See section 2.6.3 below and Chapter 3. For a dissenting view see Hughes, "Temptation and the Manipulation of Desire," 376-9, and Paul M. Hughes, "The Logic of Temptation," *Philosophia* 29 (2002): 89-110.

³⁴ Nuyen, "Nature of Temptation," 97-103.

³⁵ Day, "Temptation," 177.

³⁶ Hughes, "Temptation and the Manipulation of Desire," 376-9.

³⁷ Day, "Temptation," 177.

desires in the TE.³⁸ Which of the two is the operative force, which compels? In the first description it is the tempter but in the second description it is the TE's desires, which are only aroused by the TE themselves. When answering how temptations compel, Day offers an answer that is inconsistent with his earlier proposal. This undermines the coherency of Day's argument.

J.P. Day's account of temptation is conceptually troubled and lacks strong coherency. For this reason, the view of temptation that I argue for will avoid many of his particulars. Yet, one informative aspect of his essay is the nomenclature of "tempter," (TR), "temptee," (TE), and X as the object of temptation. The use of such variables and descriptors will help to articulate a philosophically clear and precise account. Therefore, I will utilize this language from Day in the arguments to come. In order to continue to explore the necessary components for temptation, I now turn to A.T. Nuyen's shorter and more consistent account.

2.3 A.T. Nuyen: Temptation is an Internal Conflict

A.T. Nuyen holds that "temptation" is "testing or trying of a person's character or will."³⁹ The correct account of temptation, then, will capture the key element of "the conflict, or struggle, taking place within" the one facing temptation.⁴⁰ How one responds to this struggle determines whether one merely faces temptation, and, so resists or passes the test, or whether one succumbs to temptation, and, so fails the test and is tempted. There is a distinction made between "temptation" and "tempted" in Nuyen that shows the somewhat limited nature of J.P. Day's conception. For Day, temptation is a success-verb (its use indicates its having happened, or been successful), however, Nuyen argues that temptation is a "try-verb."⁴¹ In this sense, the TR has not succeeded in tempting the TE or the TE did not yield to temptation. One immediate advantage of this is that it accords more seamlessly with standard usage. On Nuyen's try-verb idea, Jesus actually experiences temptation by Satan but is simply not *tempted* by Satan. This accords better with the text and it does so with our normal use of the word.

³⁸ Day, "Temptation," 178.

³⁹ Nuyen, "Temptation," 94.

⁴⁰ Nuyen, "Temptation," 94.

⁴¹ Nuyen, "Temptation," 92-3.

2.3.1 *The Structure of Temptation*

Nuyen, builds on Day by offering three categories of persons in temptation: the tempter, TR, the temptee, TE, and the tempted, TD—the one who has succumbed to temptation.⁴² Nuyen argues that to be a TE at least two conditions must be met, and a third must be met for TD. A person is a TE with respect to X, or is tempted to do X, if and only if:

(6) TE has a desire for X, and

(7) TE is conscious of the fact that the desire for X conflicts with some resolve which TE has made, or with TE's present mindset;

(8) [to be tempted] TE resolves to satisfy the desire for X, thus consciously giving up the previous resolve to $\sim X$, or modifying the mindset that conflicts with X.⁴³

Temptation begins with a desire for some object, action, or state of affairs where that desire is in conflict with some other aspect of the one being tempted. Jesus's desire for universal dominion is a necessary condition for Satan's temptation to be an actual temptation. Had Jesus not in some capacity wanted universal dominion, then Satan's offer would have fallen on deaf ears. Thus, authentic temptation requires that the TE desire X.

The conflict in (7) is the hinge on which temptation turns. It is "a special kind of conflict."⁴⁴ Temptation is the struggle between an existing desire and another desire, resolve, or mindset that militates against, does not accord with, or contradicts the first desire. "Mindset," for Nuyen, could be a belief, phobia, preference, attitude or some other mental state. Temptation, however, is not just any conflict of desires/mindset. Rather, the conflict has to be of such a nature that in succumbing to temptation the temptation-desire *overturns* the conflicting desire, resolve, or mindset. For example, in Jesus's wilderness temptation if Jesus had no resolve to obey God when Satan tempts him with universal dominion (in exchange for denying God), then Jesus would not actually be facing temptation. Since Jesus does have a resolve to obey and serve God, the temptation for universal dominion conflicts with Jesus's resolve. Further, Nuyen argues, this temptation to overturn the occurrent desire/resolve is *conscious*.

⁴² A.T. Nuyen, "Temptation," 91-2; cf., Day, "Temptation," 175-6.

⁴³ Nuyen, "Temptation," 96.

⁴⁴ Nuyen, "Temptation," 95.

The final condition (8) moves the temptee to the tempted and is where temptation moves from a try-verb to a success-verb.⁴⁵ This condition makes clear that it is possible to face temptation without succumbing to it and, thus, that there is a more complex structure to temptation than Day argues. To have met the requirements of (8), Jesus would have had to consciously resolve to fulfill his desire for universal domination. Notice, that Nuyen does not say that Jesus would have had to actually *carry out*, or act on, that resolve. To be tempted does not require to have actually acted on the overturning-desire, rather all that it requires is the intention to act on X.

2.3.2 Evaluation of A.T. Nuyen

Nuyen's account of temptation is clear and helpful. He makes obvious the necessary conditions for temptation, yet there is one element that needs further clarification and elaboration: namely, what is meant by "resolve"?

In order to be tempted, the one facing temptation has a desire for something, X, but this desire conflicts with "some resolve" that the one facing temptation has made, or with the temptee's mindset. What precisely is meant by resolve? Nuyen doesn't tell us. The trouble seems to be that "resolve" carries stronger connotations than intention or desire.⁴⁶ That is, "resolve" has the sense of "settled commitment" toward something; whereas an intention or desire is a willing toward something but with less settled commitment.⁴⁷ To resolve toward something (object, action, state of affairs) is further down the volitional line in terms of strength of commitment than mere intention.⁴⁸ For example, suppose I merely intend not to eat dessert in order to keep up my healthy diet. In the way I am using "merely intend" here, this would be a rather weak intention: I desire to follow through with my intention not eat dessert. I, we might say, like the idea of keeping my diet healthy. Basically, I *want* to obtain my goal of a healthy diet and think not eating dessert is the way to go and thus aim not to eat dessert. This way of

⁴⁵ Nuyen, "Temptation," 97.

⁴⁶ The *OED* shows this stronger sense by defining "resolve" as "firm intention," "determination," and "firmness"/"steadfastness," <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/163732?rskey=Cx0U50&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, accessed 06 July 2016; Richard Holton argues for a stronger notion of resolution in "How is Strength of Will Possible?," in *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality*, ed. Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (New York: Clarendon Press, 2003), 39–67.

⁴⁷ To be sure, intentions and desires come in degrees and strong desires/intentions no doubt can become (or just are) resolutions. Yet, I take it as rather clear that "resolve" is initially a stronger action concept than is intention or desire. Cf. Richard Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (New York: OUP, 2009), 6–11.

⁴⁸ Holton, *Willing*, 6–7.

thinking of my intentions has a rather weak sense—I would not be too disappointed in not actualizing my intention of not eating dessert. On another account, though, where the intention is stronger, I might say, “I *resolve* not to eat dessert” (in order not to raise my blood sugar as a diabetic, say). Here I seem to be making a stronger commitment than *merely* “intending not to.” In the former instance, if someone were to offer baklava, perhaps I would partake with only a little internal conflict. In the latter instance, however, if someone were to offer baklava, I would partake with more resistance and would be more disappointed if I overturned my resolution and partook. All this to say, intention is given to degrees, some stronger some weaker, and “to resolve” is a stronger degree of intention (stronger than “mere intention” here, at least).

In terms of Nuyen’s argument, the issue is the lack of clarity as to what point the intention is to the right degree for resolution to be the apt description. In my example immediately above, would I not have been tempted in the first iteration? I have a desire for baklava, I am aware of my desire for the Turkish delight, that desire conflicts with my intention to eat healthy but my intention to eat healthy is weak, half-hearted perhaps. Because I have not *resolved* to eat healthy and abstain from baklava, am I not tempted? This is perhaps the position that Nuyen’s argument puts me in. Unless, of course, “resolve” means something less strong than it typically does, then I would be tempted. What this brings to the fore is the need for more exactness on what “resolve” is to mean in Nuyen’s use.

The strength of Nuyen’s account is that it offers a (mostly) clear conception of temptation that is both plausible and harmonious with other moral intuitions and commitments. This suggests that Nuyen’s argument has potential to help inform the account of temptation for which I will argue. There are necessary pieces to the puzzle that Nuyen does not address and some of these are found in the other authors I consider below. The key ingredients that I will garner from Nuyen are the following: temptation is an internal conflict that involves desires, resolutions, and “other mental states,” and temptation requires conscious awareness. Moreover, his simple structure of necessary conditions will form the backbone of my more developed account to come in Chapter 3.

2.4 John McKinley: Temptation is Enticement to Sin

In his published dissertation, *Tempted for Us*, John McKinley examines the nature of temptation with special reference to the practical value of Jesus’s experiencing it.

McKinley's account, like those above, will help to fill out the evidence garnered for the argument I am making regarding temptation.

2.4.1 *Conditions of Temptation*

McKinley argues that temptation is “an enticement to sin...it is a pull or draw towards evil action;”⁴⁹ and, temptation is “an internal conflict fomented by both internal and external factors.”⁵⁰ The object of temptation is sinful and need not be merely an action; it may also include an intention. Moreover, there is a pathway to the sinful target of temptation. Temptation finds impetus in humanity's freedom and finitude on McKinley's account.⁵¹ This freedom coupled with finitude opens space for temptation in two ways. On the one hand, temptation is the immoral fulfillment of a legitimate desire; for example, the need for food fulfilled through gluttony. On the other hand, temptation may stem from corrupt desire; for example, the wantonous desire for wealth. From his brief definition we can discern four necessary conditions for temptation:

- (9) TE has a desire for X
- (10) TE's desire, or X, is sinful
- (11) TE has some internal conflict with either the desire for X, or X
- (12) TE can obtain X

First, desire for, or need of, some object: “Temptation seems to require the presence of needs or wants;” there must be some kind of *appeal* in the target of temptation to the person experiencing temptation.⁵² Temptees imaginatively consider the prospects of succumbing to the temptation or realizing their desire or need. McKinley also argues that those who succumb to temptation do so through some rationalization process whereby they believe a lie.⁵³

Second, there is an object or target of the person's desire and this object is sinful. Third, McKinley argues that there is some kind of internal conflict but little detail is offered regarding the nature or detail of that conflict. Fourth, there needs to be a pathway to the target. The implication of this last condition is that where the temptation is not a

⁴⁹ McKinley, *Tempted*, 4, 272.

⁵⁰ McKinley, *Tempted*, 273.

⁵¹ McKinley, *Tempted*, 264.

⁵² McKinley, *Tempted*, 4.

⁵³ McKinley, *Tempted*, 279.

live option, it is not really temptation at all but something else. Perhaps in such cases all that happens within the person is an illegitimate or corrupt desire. If there is not a real possibility of actualizing X, either because such states of affairs are not possible objects of actualization per se, or because there is not a metaphysically possible way for them to be actualized, then one of the necessary conditions is missing.

2.4.2 Evaluation of John McKinley

McKinley's account is brief and there seems to be two reasons for this. First, he is not offering a sustained account of temptation in principle—his account is not a philosophical or theological analysis of temptation per se. And, second, the concept serves to support a larger argument regarding the practical value of Christ's temptation. Given this second aim, it would strengthen his argument if he offered a more concerted analytic investigation of the nature of temptation. In view of its brevity, only a few evaluative comments are warranted.

Although McKinley notes a distinction between desire/want and affection, he does not do much by way of examining this distinction, which would offer further robustness to his first criteria for temptation. The key here is whether affections can be involved in temptation or only desires. As McKinley has it, affections do not seem to play any role. Why they do not do so is left unexplained. What is helpful, though, is the distinction between a legitimate desire fulfilled immorally and an immoral desire. This adds needed nuance in that it allows for a more fine-grained conception of the nature of temptation.

Arguing that succumbing to temptation requires rationalization, McKinley is treading on what has come to be known as one of Socrates's paradoxes: no one knowingly does evil.⁵⁴ On McKinley's explanation, succumbing to temptation requires believing a lie, which is to say that the one who acts on temptations does so not out of true knowledge. This element further complicates the nature of temptation by closely

⁵⁴ For example, Socrates says, "It is clear then that those who do not know things to be bad do not desire what is bad, but they desire those things that they believe to be good but that are in fact bad. It follows that those who have no knowledge of these things and believe them to be good clearly desire good things" (Plato, *Meno* [77e], trans. GMA Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 1997], 877). See also *Protagoras* 358c; *Gorgias* 468c: "For we want the things that are good...and we don't want those that are neither good nor bad, nor those that are bad" (in *Plato*, trans. E.R. Dodds, 812). There are other paradoxes than that which I note here; on those see Gerasimos Santas, "The Socratic Paradoxes," *PhR* 73, no. 2 (Apr., 1964): 147-64. For a recent exploration of the debates surrounding the so-called Socratic Paradoxes see Roslyn Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (Chicago: UCP, 2006).

relating it to *akrasia* or weakness of will. Yet, McKinley does not explore this connection or engage that larger discussion. His argument could find much support in the literature on *akrasia*/weakness of will. In Chapter 4, section 2, I explore what relationship there is between temptation and *akrasia* or weakness of will. The argument of section 2.2, in particular, will fill out the details missing in McKinley's argument. For now, his implicit gesture toward *akrasia* and succumbed temptation is interesting but needs more attention in his argument.

The core problem with McKinley's account of temptation, and this will find expression again in engagement with Brian Leftow below, is condition (12): TE can obtain X. I will argue in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2, that it is not necessary that there be an actual path to obtaining the object of the temptation, or to actualizing the state of affairs, for a valid experience of temptation to occur. We can begin to see this line of argument by considering an example.

Suppose David sees Bathsheba, the wife of another man, bathing and he desires to have sex with her; yet he also desires to be obedient to his religious laws that prohibit adultery.⁵⁵ Suppose also that David is not king but is simply a man in the kingdom, thus he has no power to facilitate an encounter between himself and Bathsheba. Indeed, he does not know who she is, nor will he have opportunity to meet her. Perhaps because he has been ordered to battle tomorrow. In this case, David has a desire, which may be either legitimate (sex) or immoral (lust)—fulfilling condition (9). This desire conflicts internally with at least one other (righteous) desire—obedience to the moral-religious law—and there is an object, or state of affairs, that is the target of his desire—fulfilling conditions (10) and (11). In this case, all the markers of McKinley's account are present except the last, (12) the path to actualization: David cannot realize his desire. Does David not experience temptation simply because he has no pathway to obtaining the sinful state of affairs? Even if David knows quite well that he could not actualize his affair with Bathsheba, surely he still is tempted. If that is correct, then, contrary to condition (12), temptation is possible even without the possibility of obtaining X. McKinley's final condition can be dismissed with no serious loss to his overall account.

McKinley's view of temptation accords well with John Owen's and A.T. Nuyen's in at least three ways. First, temptation involves psychic attitudes: desire or affections.

⁵⁵ The nature of the conflict in McKinley's approach is often cast in terms of obedience versus disobedience (e.g., "Internally, a person faced with temptation must choose according to her beliefs between *desires that lead to sin* and *desires that lead to righteousness*," *Tempted for Us*, 279).

Second, temptation is an internal conflict. And, third, temptation has moral weight. A solid evidential foundation is emerging for the account of temptation that I constructively synthesize and defend in Chapter 3.

2.5 Paul M. Hughes: Temptation

Paul Hughes's account of temptation has received no attention by any of the contemporary philosophers surveyed here even though he has written three articles wrestling with the nature of temptation and related moral issues.⁵⁶ The details of his view is given and defended in "The Logic of Temptation," and finds much in common with previous accounts. However, Hughes consistently disagrees with Day,⁵⁷ but, even though written before Brian Leftow and Adam Pelsler (see sections 2.6 and 2.7 below), his conception accords well with the other accounts surveyed and evaluated here. Hughes argues for a simple yet compelling definition of temptation: "temptation is a psychological condition in which someone is disposed toward what he believes is wrong or bad..."⁵⁸ With this as a start, Hughes offers a handful of necessary conditions for temptation.

2.5.1 *The Necessary Conditions for Temptation*

The psychological condition that is fundamental to temptation is desire.⁵⁹ Hughes contends that while there are other psychological conditions none of them makes better sense of our intuitions about temptation than desire. Yet, Hughes argues, not all desires are temptation and therefore more precision is needed. The desire, therefore, also has to be for something that is believed by the desirer to be morally bad. This makes sense of our notions that temptation is morally dubious and comports with standard definitions of temptation. But, again, not just any desire taken as bad constitutes temptation. Hughes argues: the mere presence of a desire believed to be bad, or for a bad object, is not enough to make for desire. Such a view would give "temptation" too much scope. Thus,

⁵⁶ Paul M. Hughes, "Temptation, Culpability, and the Criminal Law," *JSP* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 221-32; "The Logic of Temptation," *op. cit.*; and "Temptation and Manipulation," *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Hughes's "Temptation and Manipulation" has no defense of his own account and is instead a running critique of Day's account.

⁵⁸ Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 89. This is the same definition in all three articles and since this article has the most concerted and robust unpacking defense of this definition, it is the one that I will use.

⁵⁹ Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 92.

temptation has to have an *effective* desire, one that has motivational strength.⁶⁰ It is not enough to have just any pro-attitude and, according to Hughes, desires are simple pro-attitudes because desires are not motivations. Desire must couple with motivation and become an effective desire in order for temptation to be possible, argues Hughes. Two reasons give plausibility to this. First, some person might want or wish or desire something bad but have no intention of acting on such pro-attitudes. It is difficult to see, Hughes contends, that such cases count as temptation since no action, which he construes very broadly (mental or physical), would be forthcoming. Second, allowing that just any pro-attitude would count as possible temptation, again, broadens the scope of temptation too widely, turning obvious cases of non-tempting desire into temptation. One further element is necessary, Hughes argues: moral vacillation, or conflict with some “negative evaluative attitude” toward the effective desire, or object of desire.⁶¹ To experience temptation, then, requires the following necessary conditions:

(13) TE effectively desires X

(14) TE believes that X, or the desire for X, is morally bad

(15) TE has a negative evaluative attitude that conflicts with X, or the desire for X

2.5.2 Evaluation of Paul Hughes

Paul Hughes’s argument has a host of strengths. First, Hughes offers the only defense of why focusing on the experience of the temptee is logically prior and therefore more fundamental to an account of temptation than focus on a tempter. Second, while many others assume that desire is fundamental, Hughes offers a rationale for this intuition. Temptation is a psychological condition and therefore any account of temptation will need to identify the psychic states involved. This offers needed rational evidence to the standard starting place for desire-based accounts of temptation. Third, and finally, Hughes offers an argument for why the temptee only needs to believe that the desire for X is bad rather than *know* that it is bad. Making the epistemic condition as strong as knowledge has two problematic implications, Hughes contends. First it raises the epistemic standard too high given that knowledge requires both justification and true belief. Moreover, knowing rather than believing would also require a temptee to have a moral scope of knowledge that is unreasonable. Both of these lead to the second reason

⁶⁰ Hughes, “Logic of Temptation,” 93-4. Hughes is adopting “effective desire” from Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *JPh* 68, no. 1 (January 1971): 5-20.

⁶¹ Hughes, “Logic of Temptation,” 93.

why belief is more apt than knowledge: it keeps the scope of temptation reasonable. If knowledge is the standard for condition (2), TE [*knows*] that X...is bad, then many intuitive cases of temptation are no longer temptation because the high standard of knowledge is not met.

The first condition, “TE effectively desires X,” and its ranging rationale invites analytic critique. Hughes does not delineate what his operative theory of desire is and this undermines the precision of his account. What is clear, however, is that Hughes’s theory of desire is not action-based, which is the view of desire as “to be disposed to act to bring about what is desired.”⁶² Of course, there are many theories available, but the action-based theory is the most widely held view among philosophers of action.⁶³ Thus, when Hughes divorces desire from motivation some justification is needed, even if it is by way of simple appeal to another theory of desire. At best, he could hold to a pleasure-based theory of desire since the desire for X in Hughes’s account also includes, but not necessarily, “anticipatory delight.”⁶⁴ The “not necessarily” qualifier, however, leaves the account of desire less precise and unclear. Ultimately, Hughes’s account needs a clear conception of desire: what is the operative theory of desire and are the relevant desires of temptation intrinsic, instrumental, occurrent, standing, or dispositional?

2.6 Brian Leftow

In a recent article on Jesus’s temptation, Brian Leftow, as a way of grounding later arguments, offers a brief analysis of temptation.⁶⁵ He begins by offering three answers to the question, what does “was tempted” mean? Leftow’s primary concern is Jesus’s temptation and therefore he is not analyzing what condition(s) is or are necessary for succumbing to temptation but only what constitutes the experience of temptation.

2.6.1 *The Meaning of “Was Tempted”*

The three ways we can understand “was tempted” are: First, someone deliberately brings a state of affairs to the mind of another “in order to arouse his/her desire and thereby

⁶² Tim Schroeder, “Desire,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/desire/>, §1.1.

⁶³ Schroeder, “Desire,” §1.

⁶⁴ Hughes, “Logic of Temptation,” 95.

⁶⁵ Leftow, “Tempting God,” 4-11.

produce a course of action.”⁶⁶ To be tempted, then, is to have a tempter arouse in a temptee a desire for some state of affairs, the desire of which will produce action aimed at obtaining the desired state of affairs. Second, “was tempted” could mean a person encounters a situation not deliberately offered by another, which encounter brings “to mind a state of affairs apt to arouse his/her desire and thereby produce a course of action.”⁶⁷ The example Leftow uses is that of a pedestrian coming across a dropped wallet. The situation may arouse the pedestrian’s desire for the wallet and this desire produce the plan of action of picking up the wallet and keeping its contents; thus, the pedestrian “was tempted” to take the wallet. Third, and finally, to experience temptation could be the result of some inner state. Leftow does not offer much explanation as to what this might mean except to say that this could not be ascribed to God given what the Letter of James claims: “God cannot be tempted by evil” (1.13 NIV). Perhaps what this third answer says is that temptation as an inner state is one that is not aroused by outside conditions but arises completely internal to the one experiencing temptation. Such temptation might look like this: suppose Sam desires to be an incredibly successful entrepreneur and one way that Sam can accomplish this is by being an unscrupulous business owner. Completely internal temptation might arise for Sam, based on the desire for financial success, to maintain dishonest accounting ledgers in order to pay less taxes. Sam’s situation is unlike Leftow’s first and second way of unpacking “was tempted” but plausibly fits the third. In sum, Leftow articulates three connotations for “was tempted”: (i) a tempter (TR) tempts a temptee (TE), (ii) TE encounters a situation where external factors arouse temptation, and (iii) temptation arises entirely internal to TE.

2.6.2 Necessary Conditions for Temptation

Leftow gives six clear necessary conditions for temptation. However, he argues against their being jointly sufficient since there may be more to temptation than he is exploring. His considerations are constrained by a larger argument about Jesus’s temptation; therefore, Leftow does not offer a full analysis of temptation. Yet, his account is substantial. Leftow argues that a TE experiences temptation if TE experiences the following conditions conjunctively:

- (16) TE is considering a state of affairs, X
- (17) TE wants X to obtain

⁶⁶ Leftow, “Tempting,” 4.

⁶⁷ Leftow, “Tempting,” 4.

- (18) There is a type of act that TE believes will bring about X
- (19) TE occurrently wants to do an act of the type that will bring about X
- (20) TE has something against X (for example hesitation or ambivalence)
- (21) X must be a live option for TE

Temptation is not tied to immorality in Leftow's explanation. He makes this clear with the running example that unpacks the necessary conditions, namely that of being tempted to eat a cookie. The first condition is straight-forward since there is no explanation of it. However, it is not entirely clear what is meant by "considering" a state of affairs except that Leftow offers, "my experiencing the pleasure of eating the cookie."⁶⁸ In the other conditions, volition factors in prominently so we may gather that here too "considering" is more than simply thinking about X, it is thinking about X in a way that arouses desire or volition, which condition (17) makes apparent. This condition needs more explanation and Leftow provides it. It is not just any desire that condition (17) references. A standing desire, a desire that plays no active role in the person's psychic space, is not sufficient for temptation since one could then be tempted while merely dreaming of eating cookies.⁶⁹ The kind of desire necessary for temptation, Leftow argues, is an occurrent desire—a desire that plays an active role in the person's psychic space.⁷⁰

Being in a state of temptation requires a conflict (like Owen, Nuyen, and McKinley): it involves both wanting X and having something against X. To amend Leftow's example: I want to complete this chapter but it would be odd to say that I am tempted to complete it since I have no occurrent state of mind against that desire. The implication of this condition and its rationale is that simply wanting something evil is not enough to constitute being tempted. If someone does evil wholeheartedly, as Leftow says, then they do it without being tempted.⁷¹ This holds even if the state of affairs that someone wants is offered or presented by an outside party. That said, simply because the desire for the state of affairs is aroused by outside factors does not mean temptation has occurred—one has to have something against X that is occurrent and concurrent with the desire for X. Moreover, what the TE has against the state of affairs cannot be trivial. The

⁶⁸ Leftow, "Tempting," 4.

⁶⁹ Leftow, "Tempting," 5; Schroeder, "Desire," §2.4.

⁷⁰ Leftow, "Tempting," 5.

⁷¹ Eleonore Stump doubts that anyone can be wholeheartedly for evil, see *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (New York: OUP, 2010), 125-6.

person tempted to actualize X needs to have some thick, robust sense of hesitation or ambivalence toward X rather than a thin, weak resistance—in which case, the person is *almost* wholeheartedly for X.⁷² Leftow argues that one must be “*significantly* invested in not” actualizing the state of affairs.⁷³

For Leftow, obtaining X needs to be a live option for the tempee—condition (21). If the occurrent desire against X is so strong that one never really gives serious consideration to it, then one is not really tempted since X is not a live option. Leftow’s wanting a cookie may be mitigated so strongly by his desire to keep working that he never really takes seriously eating the cookie, and thus eating the cookie is not really a temptation for him. “So to constitute a temptation, a desire to act must be salient: strong enough and so-related to other desires as to make doing what that desire is a desire to do a live option.”⁷⁴ Leftow adds a fascinating stipulation to this condition: it is possible to experience temptation unconsciously; that is, a desire does not need to be conscious in order to be part of temptation. Some desire may be hidden from our consciousness because we are self-deceptive and especially so with shameful desires. The example Leftow offers is one’s having a desire for admiration. On account of self-deception one might not realize that some foolish stunt is a temptation to garner admiration. Yet, all the same, one could want admiration and want to bring it about that one is admired, and be aware of some actions that will bring about such admiration (foolish stunts, for example), and even want to do those actions (fulfilling conditions (16)-(21) and, thus, experience temptation.

2.6.3 Evaluation of Brian Leftow

I find Leftow’s brief enumeration of temptation compelling and insightful. However, there are two areas that raise worries for coherency: “desire” in condition (16) and condition (19) itself. First, while Leftow’s account is instructive, any robust account that takes desire to be a core ingredient needs to conceptualize more clearly the nature of desire. Leftow argues for occurrent rather than standing desires but does not address intrinsic or instrumental desires and possibly equivocates between “standing” and

⁷² Leftow, “Tempting,” 6.

⁷³ Leftow, “Tempting,” 5.

⁷⁴ Leftow, “Tempting,” 6.

“dispositional” desires. More nuance is needed on this point, and, while building on Leftow’s strong foundation, I argue for this nuance in Chapter 3, section 3.1.

Conditions (18), “there is a type of act that TE believes will bring about X,” and (19), “TE occurrently wants to do an act of the type that will bring about X,” are clearly interconnected. Yet Leftow offers these two without explanation. I argue that condition (19) is not necessary for temptation especially given condition (20)—“TE has something against X.” An example will make the point. Suppose an addict not under addictive compulsion is considering the state of affairs of experiencing the high from a particular drug, X, and the addict wants X to obtain—he wants to experience the high. The addict knows of an act which will bring about X—taking some set of pills, for example. So far, the addict has satisfied conditions (16)-(18). But now also suppose that the addict does not want to take the pills, $\sim(19)$. Even though he has them on hand and is able—meeting condition (21)—he does not want to take them because the addict has something against getting high. Thus, he also meets condition (20): perhaps he wants to reform his ways and not be an addict. It would still be the case that the addict is genuinely tempted to obtain X even if the addict does not want to perform the action type that will obtain X. Condition (19), then, would not be necessary for temptation. Dropping this condition would in no way radically undermine Leftow’s account, particularly since condition (18) should remain.

The tight connection between conditions (18), “there is a type of act that TE believes will bring about X,” and (21), “X must be a live option for TE,” is not obviously brought forth in Leftow’s explanation, but the intimacy of the two is clear upon closer examination. In fact, dropping condition (19) (TE occurrently wants to do an act of the type that will bring about X), bears no overall weakness to the argument precisely because conditions (18) and (21) should remain. While we can reject condition (19), it is considerably harder to reject condition (18). Suppose again our addict is facing a desire to obtain X, but this time there is no clear action that could bring about X for the addict. It could be that our addict is simply ignorant and cannot see any action type that would obtain X, and, so believes that no action type will obtain X; or it could be that the addict has been part of a rehabilitation program which administers a counter drug that inhibits the high-inducing effect of any other drug. In either case, the addict believes that there is no action type that would obtain X. It is not clear that the addict is now experiencing temptation. Rather, he is merely experiencing an occurrent desire for the experience of being high, which Leftow has already precluded as not being enough for temptation to

occur. That condition (18) is necessary where condition (19) is not should be clear and thus all that is really necessary on Leftow's account are conditions (16)-(18), (20), and (21).

From Leftow's argument a number of key factors come forward that will serve as evidentiary support to the coming argument for the constructive account of temptation offered and defended in Chapter 3. In agreement with the previous thinkers, Leftow confirms and gives more analytic precision to the notion that temptation includes desire and involves some kind of internal conflict. His greater analytic precision will inform the argument to come.

2.7 Adam Pelsler: Temptation as Enticement to Vice

Adam Pelsler has recently argued that Jesus was sinless, not fully virtuous, and developed virtue in his overcoming temptation. In order to substantiate his thesis, Pelsler offers a brief account of temptation.⁷⁵ He offers a clear and simple definition of temptation: "enticement to act in a way that would be contrary to virtue."⁷⁶ Attending carefully to his account will give more evidential substance to the argument I construct in Chapter 3.

2.7.1 *The Nature of Temptation*

Pelsler explains the nature of temptation in terms of three elements. First, temptation is action-directed.⁷⁷ That is, when someone is tempted, they are tempted to *do* something. Pelsler argues that "action" should be understood as volitional—it is willful—and broad so as to include mental (entertain thoughts, fanaticize, indulge emotion, etc.) and physical actions. Second, desire is an essential component of temptation.⁷⁸ Pelsler adopts a good-based theory of desire whereby desires are perceptions or beliefs about the goodness of the object of desire: to desire X, is for X to appear good.⁷⁹ While he admits that perhaps not all desires are best characterized by the good-based theory, most experiences of temptation involve those kinds of desires. Thus, temptation "often, though

⁷⁵ Pelsler, "Temptation," 81-101.

⁷⁶ Pelsler, "Temptation," 84.

⁷⁷ Pelsler, "Temptation," 83.

⁷⁸ Pelsler, "Temptation," 83.

⁷⁹ Pelsler, "Temptation," 83; cf. Graham Oddie, *Value, Reality, and Desire* (New York: OUP, 2005); Dennis W. Stampe, "The authority of desire," *PhR*. 96, no. 3 (1987): 335-81.

perhaps not always, involves what I call *desiderative perception*.”⁸⁰ And, third, in temptation the object of desire is morally bad.⁸¹ On Pelser’s argument, disagreeing with John Owen’s, “morally bad” is not “sin” but “contrary to virtue.”⁸²

Here, then, are the necessary conditions for temptation on Pelser’s account:

- (22) TE has some desire/desiderative perception for X—sees X as good for TE
- (23) X is some mental or physical action
- (24) X is contrary to virtue

2.7.2 Evaluation of Adam Pelser

A great benefit of Pelser’s account for this project is that it shows the current trajectory of connecting temptation to virtue is ripe for analytic exploration. As Pelser notes, the relationship between temptation and virtue has largely been left unconsidered by Christians, especially how this might come forward in the life of Jesus Christ.⁸³ Thus, his account, and therefore my own, are attempts to redress an unattended-to moral problem.

A strength of Pelser’s argument that is missing in other accounts is his attempt to locate his view of desire in one of the philosophically common theories of desire (namely, good-based theories). By leaving open that desire could be captured accurately by other theories (for example, action-based or pleasure-based), Pelser’s argument allows that his account of temptation might accord well with other accounts of desire. However, by not investigating deeper into desire theory, Pelser’s account leaves unanswered what kinds of good-based desires are operative in temptation (for example, intrinsic, instrumental, occurrent, standing, or dispositional). A fully orbited account of temptation that takes desire as a central component will, therefore, have to more precisely and specifically describe the concept of desire that is operative. I do this in Chapter 3, section 3.1.

Perhaps the greatest problem with Pelser’s account, and what puts him at odds with all other accounts examined above except John Owen, is that his does not include a conflict component. On Pelser’s view, it is enough to have a desire for that which is contrary to virtue for it to be temptation. But this radically departs from intuitive, and

⁸⁰ Pelser, “Temptation,” 84.

⁸¹ Pelser, “Temptation,” 84.

⁸² Pelser, “Temptation,” 84.

⁸³ Pelser, “Temptation,” 81.

considered, accounts of temptation. This threatens the coherence of his account: it may remain plausible on its own, but it will have trouble cohering with our intuitive moral conception of temptation by making the scope of temptation too great. As Pelsler argues, the fully virtuous person does not experience most, perhaps no, temptation.⁸⁴ This is because the fully virtuous person's desiderative perception is rightly attuned to virtue such that they do not perceive as good those actions which are bad.⁸⁵ However, if Pelsler is right about temptation, then his argument would imply that the fully vicious person experiences nothing but temptation all, or most of, the time. Since the fully vicious person's desiderative perception is mal-attuned, they would constantly desire mental and physical actions that are contrary to virtue—they would constantly be experiencing temptation. But that seems highly problematic: wholeheartedness precludes temptation. Pelsler's account could add a necessary condition regarding conflict without threat to his larger argument and thereby bolster his definition of temptation.

2.8 Biblical-Theological Considerations

Work in analytic moral theology must consider and engage biblical and theological sources. Some theological sources have already been considered above therefore I now turn my attention to the Christian scriptures and biblical scholars who help to exegete and interpret those texts.

While the Christian Bible does not offer an explicit account of the nature of temptation, it does yield a few important insights that can inform an analytically precise concept toward which this project aims. Furthermore, in order to be robustly Christian in the traditional sense, any analytic theological account of temptation should find in Scripture, where possible, a normative starting place. This follows the methodology outlined in Chapter 1, section 3.4. There I noted Max Baker-Hyatt's three activities that analytic (moral) theology deploys in bringing the Christian scriptures to bear on the theological enterprise: (i) to find within the text of the Bible topics for philosophical-theological analysis; (ii) to develop philosophically robust Christian theology by unpacking what is entailed by scriptural data; and (iii) to take claims made by the Bible as premises in developing arguments. What follows, then, is an intentionally brief

⁸⁴ This is also endorsed by John McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives," *PAS* 52 (1978): 13-42 and Susan Stark, "Virtue and Emotion," *Noûs* 35 (2001): 440-55.

⁸⁵ Pelsler, "Temptation," 85.

application of these three activities such that the limited data from Scripture will serve as a conceptual starting place and guiding parameters (as noted below in section 2.7.3).

There are two experiences of temptation in the Christian scriptures that we need to distinguish and note for the purposes of this project. First there are Jesus's temptations and second there are everyone else's temptations. A quick look at both will give further substance to the nature of temptation argued for in the next chapter. As this is a work in analytic moral theology and not biblical exegesis, the following exploration will necessarily be limited. There are two chief reasons for this. First, the textual data requisite for analytic construction is both limited and does not offer explicit or clear guidance regarding the philosophical nature of temptation. Second, space and the argument's goal also prohibit in-depth examination of every temptation story or reference. Consequently, I will focus my attention on selected texts from the New Testament. There are two reasons for this narrowed focus. First, most philosophical or theological accounts of temptation begin with, or at least mention Jesus's temptation. For Christians, starting with Jesus makes theological sense and his experience might bring illumination to the nature of temptation. The second reason the New Testament will be prioritized is because it is there that we find moral reflection on temptation in a way that is conducive to building a theological account. There are a host of temptation experiences in the text of Scripture and, while these texts can be instructive, it is difficult to develop a robust analytic account from only narrative. Therefore, it is reasonable for this study to attend specifically to those texts that either have functioned as informative for other accounts of temptation or offer promise for informing an analytic account of temptation.

2.8.1 The Temptation of Christ

Although Day references Jesus's temptation as a paradigm example, it is not clear that, in fact, Jesus's temptations *are* paradigmatic for non-Messianic humans. If what Day has in mind are the three temptations of Jesus by Satan as recorded in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 1.12-13; Matthew 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13), and it seems he does, then many scholars suggest a contrary view: namely, that Jesus's temptations are not typical to normal human experience.⁸⁶ There are two ways to understand the difference from normal

⁸⁶ Jeffrey B. Gibson, "Jesus' Wilderness Temptation According to Mark," *JSNT* 53 (1994): 3-34; Luigi Schiavo, "The Temptation of Jesus: The Eschatological Battle and the New Ethic of the First Followers of Jesus in Q," *JSNT* 25, no. 2 (2002): 141-164; Jacques Roets, "The Victory of Christ Over the

human experience. On the one hand, Jesus's temptation seems most closely tied to his Messianic vocation.⁸⁷ Since, in the Christian theological tradition, Jesus is the only Messiah it follows that no other persons can experience temptation with reference to Jesus's messianic vocation. To be sure, humans are called into fellowship with God and this call comes with an empowered vocation to do what Jesus did/does. In this sense, then, Jesus's temptation, as the Second Adam and New Humanity, could be paradigmatic for human temptations.⁸⁸ However, this parallel is much more narrow than the standard moral conception of temptation and, therefore, in a more generalized moral conception, which is the focus of this study, Jesus's temptation is not paradigmatic: it is not a "typical" experience of temptation.

On the other hand, Jesus's temptation bears a similarity and a difference to standard human temptation in his wilderness experience: namely, that it is a *test* or *trial*. The Greek (*peirazo*) behind the English translation carries the connotation of "to put to the test," or "to try," as in "put through a trial" or "to attempt," and it aligns with other usage (earlier Greek writing, Septuagint, and the Pseudepigrapha) where it carries the idea of "to ascertain or demonstrate trustworthiness."⁸⁹ The obvious similarity is that non-messianic humans also face trials and tests in order to determine trustworthiness. Yet, and here is the substantial difference, our normal use of "temptation" is not only or merely to talk about tests or trials but to talk about internal moral conflicts and their relation to actions. To be sure, some trials are temptations, and perhaps even all temptations are trials of some kind, but not all trials are temptations. Thus, in the standard, everyday *moral* usage, "temptation" is not synonymous with "trial." Humans, therefore, might find some overlap between their generalized experience of temptation, but Jesus's wilderness temptation cannot be the paradigm example of everyday, run-of-

Tempter as Help to the Believer's Fight Against Sin: A Reflection on Matthew 4:1-11," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 22 (2011): 107-127; Eleonore Stump, *Atonement* (New York: OUP, 2018), 240-244.

⁸⁷ Roets ("The Victory of Christ Over the Tempter") very clearly draws out this peculiar aspect to Christ's temptations. See also, Denny Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?" *JETS* 58, no. 1 (2015): 95-115.

⁸⁸ I am indebted to Jesse Stone (PhD candidate, University of St. Andrews) for pointing out this theological overlap between Jesus's temptation and humanity's temptation.

⁸⁹ Gibson, "Jesus' Wilderness Temptation;" especially see Gibson's collation of the sources substantiating this meaning (10-11).

Seesemann suggests the bulk of the occurrences of *peirazo*—or some equivalent—in the LXX and the NT carries the idea of "testing;" although, this isn't to suggest that "testing" and "temptation" do not overlap (see Heinrich Seesemann, sv. *πειρα, πειραω, πειραζω*, et al., in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, vol. VI, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968], 23-36). Clearly some temptations are also tests.

the-mill moral temptation. The implication for this project, then, is that while some important information can be gleaned from Christ's temptation either in the wilderness or in Gethsemane (for example, that temptations are also trials), we cannot construct an *analytic* account of temptation from these sources alone. Therefore, other New Testament mentions of temptation will prove more useful to such a construction.

2.8.2 *The Lord's Prayer*

When instructing the disciples on how to pray, Jesus tells them to pray: “and lead us not into temptation” (Matt 6.13; Luke 11.4 NIV cf. Matt 26.41; Mark 14.38: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” and Luke 22.40: “Pray that you may not enter into temptation” NIV). But this translation of *peirasmos*—“temptation”—is contested and not well supported by many scholars.⁹⁰ Indeed, as C. Clifton Black notes, this clause in the passage is particularly troublesome both linguistically and theologically.⁹¹ From the linguistic perspective, as we saw above with Jesus's “temptation,” the Greek—*peirasmos*—can, depending on the context, be translated as either “temptation” or “testing.”⁹² Joseph Fitzmyer suggests that the basic meaning of *peirasmos* is “test” or “trial” as in an “action by which one verifies or probes the quality of a person or thing.”⁹³ Of course, “temptation” is also a possible meaning. Deciding between the two options when translating the Lord's Prayer is best determined by theological considerations and this will show whether and how this prayer is instructive for developing an account of temptation.

⁹⁰ C.F.D. Moule outlines well the various problems both linguistic and theological with translating *peirasmos*. See “An Unsolved Problem in the Temptation Clause in the Lord's Prayer,” *RTR* 33, no. 3 (September-December 1974): 65-75. Cf., Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 146-8; and N.T. Wright, “The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer,” in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002), 144-7.

⁹¹ C. Clifton Black, *The Lord's Prayer*, Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church, ed. Smueal E. Balentine (Louisville, KY: WJKP, 2018), 195.

⁹² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33a, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 151.

⁹³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “And Lead Us Not Into Temptation,” *Biblica* 84 (2003): 260. Hagner appears to agree as his own translations of the Greek render *peirasmos* as “testing” (*Matthew*, 151); Black simply transliterates the Greek before offering the varying views and finally setting on either “testing,” “proving,” or “trial” as likely the best translations (*The Lord's Prayer*, 205). Without giving any attention to arguments in favor of “temptation,” David Clark affirms a “testing” connotation for *peirasmos* (*On Earth as in Heaven: The Lord's Prayer from Jewish Prayer to Christian Ritual* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017], 54-55).

To put it simply, if a bit crudely, the theological difference is this: “God is the author of trials, the devil the initiator of temptations...God may test and also elicit the strength of faith in God’s children, but only the tempter aims to snare humans beings and bring them into despair.”⁹⁴ This captures well the general line of rationale that scholars offer when positing “testing” or “time of trial” as the best translation of *peirasmon*.⁹⁵ Praying for God not to lead us into something that, by nature, he would not lead his followers into seems nonsensical. The key here is how these authors understand “temptation:” for each, temptation involves “enticement to sin.” Little beyond that is said about temptation and certainly not any kind of analytic ethical parsing of the concept. This does not suggest, however, that there is nothing instructive for an analytic account of temptation. A couple observations are available. First, we can reiterate a take-away from the previous section, 2.7.1: testing, trials, and temptation are different; not all tests or trials are temptations, even if (possibly) all temptations are tests or trials. Second, in the language and context of Scripture, according to many commentators, there is something inherently bad about temptation. This is not to say that for them the mere experience of temptation is morally culpable. Jesus’s temptations and sinlessness would present a serious theological problem for this view. Rather, temptation is, for the authors in the New Testament context, somehow necessarily connected to immorality or sin.⁹⁶

2.8.3 *The Letter of James On Temptation*

Jesus’s temptation and the Lord’s Prayer are not all that an inquirer has to work from in the Christian scriptures. There are other mentions of temptation in the New Testament. With one exception, I am not hopeful that other texts will prove more helpful than what has already been gained from the look at Jesus’s temptation and instruction on prayer. All other texts rely on the same Greek word—“to test/try”—and the texts can be reasonably interpreted as referring to trials that are not precisely mere temptations.⁹⁷ Put differently, many of the New Testament texts could just as well be talking about testing

⁹⁴ Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Trial and Temptation: An Essay in the Multiple Logics of Faith,” *TT* (2000): 327. Gregersen offers perhaps the best arguments for retaining “temptation” as an appropriate translation of *peirasmos* based on particular Jewish theological concepts about God.

⁹⁵ Dale C. Allison suggest that *peirasmos* may have a particular reference in the Synoptics’ mind: the messianic woes, especially those in Revelation 3.10. See “Matthew,” in *The Gospels*, OBC, eds. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York: OUP, 2001), 43.

⁹⁶ Black notes that this is not the case in everyday locution where we often describe our enticement for another “piece of pie” as a typical usage of “temptation” (*The Lord’s Prayer*, 198).

⁹⁷ Both Black and Hagner briefly mention other New Testament passages with this in mind.

one's character in a non-temptation manner.⁹⁸ This suggests that they will be no more informative for an analytic construction than either Jesus's Wilderness Temptation or the Lord's Prayer.

The exception is James 1.13-15. Some caution is in order, however, since James is not offering moral philosophy but a pastoral response.⁹⁹ Yet, some lines of analytic approach come through. Here is the text:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (James 1.13-15 ESV).

A few observations are worth mentioning and each reiterates other observations noted above.¹⁰⁰ First, a distinction is at work between testing and tempting, and second temptation is connected to immorality.¹⁰¹ It is not clear that there is a necessary connection such that all temptations have to do with evil, but the text does indicate in that direction.¹⁰² This seems to be built on the following idea: if God is omnibenevolent, and temptation is morally dubious, then God cannot be a tempter.¹⁰³ The third observation is that temptation springs from an internal aspect of persons, namely,

⁹⁸ A possible exception is 1 Cor 10.13. See Wright, "The Lord's Prayer," 145-6.

⁹⁹ Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011), 73. McKnight points out that there is some debate about the meaning of *peirasmos* in this pericope ("test" or "temptation"), although he argues for the view that "temptation" is the appropriate meaning (but thinks that "test" is the right connotation in verses 1-12).

¹⁰⁰ These observations come from McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 73-76; and Marie E. Issacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, RNTS (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub. Inc., 2002), 187-89.

¹⁰¹ McKnight suggests that a solid translation of vs. 13 should read: "Let no one say when he is *tested*, "I am being *tempted* by God..." (italics added). The point being, the reader should not confuse testing with temptation. Ralph P. Martin seems to agree with McKnight but offers no explicit discussion of "temptation" (*James*, WBC, eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988], 77).

¹⁰² If temptation is something God never does, which is what the text appears to indicate, and it is connected to evil, even if not explicitly stated in every case, then it would appear that temptation is *closely* tied to immorality. Douglas Moo notes that God *does* test/try his people and so what James has in mind for *peirazo* in vs. 13 cannot merely be testing (*James*, TNTC, ed. Leon Morris [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987]).

¹⁰³ On God's being omnibenevolent see: William Mann, "The Divine Attributes," *AphQ*.12, no. 2 (April 1975): 151-59; Edward Wierenga, "Intrinsic Maxima and Omnibenevolence," *IJPR* 10, no. 1 (1979): 41-50; David Basinger, "In What Sense Must God be Omnibenevolent?" *IJPR* 14, no. 1 (1983): 3-15; and Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz, *The Divine Attributes*, Exploring the Philosophy of Religion, ed. Michael L. Peterson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2002).

desire.¹⁰⁴ These elements track in broad ways with what previous authors have posited and this suggests a common foundation upon which an account of temptation can be built. Below, in section 3, I give a protoaccount of temptation based on the data gathered here and then argue for and defend that conception in Chapter 3. The philosophical account to follow will take the biblical data—(a) that temptation is not mere testing, (b) that it is related to desire, and (c) that it is morally dubious—as both a minimal normative-reflective starting place and as the governing parameters. This fulfills the methodological activities (ii) and (iii) from Baker-Hytch discussed in Chapter 1 (sections 2.1.1 and 3.4)¹⁰⁵ and it works to ensure the argument produces an account that is globally coherent, that “hangs” with, the biblical data.

3 Conclusion: Summary and A Protoaccount of Temptation

This chapter has surveyed and evaluated the most pertinent literature on the nature of temptation in order to develop the evidence needed to construct an analytic account of the nature of temptation. This review provides the necessary groundwork from which a robust concept of temptation can be constructed. In turn, this concept will help make sense of a fundamental aspect of the ultimate claim of this thesis, *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*. Moving toward an affirmation of that notion requires a careful and considered account of temptation.

I have reviewed seven philosophical-theological accounts of temptation: John Owen, J.P. Day, A.T. Nuyen, John McKinley, Paul M. Hughes, Bryan Leftow, Adam Pelsler, and the pertinent biblical-theological data. Based on the above examination and evaluation, I will formulate a working definition and the necessary and (potentially) sufficient conditions of temptation in Chapter 3. While the authors and data surveyed herein have roughly charted a path forward, none has offered a robust analytic account of temptation. This has left a gap in the literature on philosophical-theological moral psychology. My incipient account below—further developed and defended in Chapter 3—begins to fill this gap while also being internally consistent and coherent with moral philosophy and theology. Thus, it has plausibility and conceptual fit with other moral intuitions and frameworks.

¹⁰⁴ What is possibly meant by “desire” is nicely considered by Marie Issacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 189.

¹⁰⁵ That is, (ii) to develop philosophically robust Christian theology by unpacking what is entailed by scriptural data and (iii) to take claims made by the Bible as premises in developing arguments (cf. Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology,” 351).

Analytic moral theology, as argued in Chapter 1, section 3, is motivated by the ambition to gain theologically and philosophically informed knowledge about morality. This is done by drawing from sources in the analytic tradition of moral philosophy and theological data from sacred Scripture and church tradition. Above I have attended to the pertinent arguments and data from both of those spheres. In what follows I will gather this evidence and formulate it into an emerging constructive analytic conception of temptation, which, when combined with the defense in Chapter 3, is a substantial contribution to both moral philosophy and moral theology.

The definition of temptation that I will defend coheres well with the relevant literature but also responds and improves on those places where the other accounts are either missing nuance or offer problematic conditions. On the one hand, then, there will be very little overlap between my account and J.P. Day's concept of temptation—his account was too troubled to be wholly informative. On the other hand, the commonality of the other data regarding the role of desire in temptation and the presence of conflict shows that my account of temptation has promising coherence with thinkers above. Ultimately, the definition I defend gathers and constructively synthesizes evidence from a variety of sources and brings that evidence into a novel and robust account capable of withstanding analytic scrutiny. As a protoaccount of temptation, I offer the following: temptation is an internal conflict that involves desire and is morally problematic.

In Chapter 3 I will expand this protoaccount into a technical definition and argue for substantiation of it by defending six necessary conditions for experiencing temptation and offer analytic evidence for the coherency of those conditions. With the definition of temptation made robust, I can then turn, in Chapter 4, to the question of how it is related to another experience in moral psychology: namely, *akrasia* or weakness of will, which is widely discussed by philosophers and, importantly, often used synonymously with temptation. Chapters 2 through 4, then, cumulatively provide a precise notion of temptation which can then function in the final defense of the claim that moral virtue formation requires the possibility of temptation. Following the analytic mode of argumentation, this means dissecting large concepts into their smaller core parts, analyzing those parts, and bringing them back together in a way that is logically consistent and coherent. Part of this task is accomplished in Chapters 2 through 4, the final part will be completed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: An Analytic Account of the Nature of Temptation

1 Introduction: Methodology and Contextualizing the Argument

Based on the critical engagement with the extant literature on temptation in the previous chapter, this chapter offers a constructive account of the nature of temptation that avoids deficiencies in other accounts and articulates a more complete understanding of this important moral experience.¹ The developing argument here seeks a more adequate understanding of temptation that is more realistic to our common moral experience, an understanding articulated and processed using the current tools of analytic philosophy and analytic theology, and situated well within what we may call the relatively new and emerging field of Christian analytic moral theology. In fact, if this study is successful, then, at this time, it will be not only one of the only extensive accounts of temptation, but it will also be the only account on the topic that employs new analytic methods. Thus, this project as a whole is intended to make dual contributions to analytic moral theology are in terms of both content and method.

1.1 The Application of Analytic Moral Theology to a Definition of Temptation

The aim in this chapter is to contribute to the development of the overarching argument of this project by providing a constructive account of temptation expressed in analytic terms and taking the literature review as background. Such an account will exemplify the thesis's analytic methodology of making distinctions by breaking complex propositions down into component parts. Furthermore, this analytic work will mark clearly what is meant by "temptation" in the project's thesis: *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*. Developing this account of temptation will involve several methodological components or elements, including the following.

One element of the groundwork for this investigation in analytic moral theology is the necessarily brief scriptural work in Chapter 2. A core ambition of analytic moral theology is to provide clear, coherent, and rigorous explanations of our moral

¹ I am indebted to the valuable feedback from persons present at my reading of an abbreviated portion of this chapter at the Society of Christian Philosophers Eastern Region Conference, Asbury University, September 2017.

experiences in a way that makes sense of theological data. This includes attempting to evaluate and explain our common moral experiences in a way that both comports to and is informed by biblical considerations. Thus, in this chapter, data from the scriptural investigation in Chapter 2 will, on the one hand, set the parameters for analytic defense, and, on the other hand, will give grounding insight. Put differently, the constructive account, and analytic defense, in this chapter will take its start from the biblical data and effect a definition that will comport with the biblical data. Thus, the philosophical moral psychology and philosophy of action sources that I marshal in defense of the necessary conditions for temptation are deployed in order to make analytically precise the limited biblical data that set the conceptual parameters.

The next element in the investigation takes seriously the common ideas from the authors evaluated in Chapter 2 that can be reasonably defended and thus deserve consideration as aspects of any final, well-considered theory. This component, too, is both an exemplification of the analytic methodology—informed by relevant arguments in the analytic, anglophone literature base—and indicative of my account’s coherency with other philosophically and theologically reflective positions.

Another component of this argument is a set of background assumptions that function to narrow the scope of the argument. The account I develop is for paradigmatic experiences of temptation in healthy, sane, adult human persons. There are two working assumptions, then. The first is that there is a such thing as “paradigmatic experiences of temptation.” What I mean by this is that I argue as if there are “every day,” “normal” experiences of temptation and that our reflective intuition gives us access to those experiences and the account that I argue for is located there. The second assumption built into the argument is that the account of temptation presumes that healthy, sane adult human persons are the center of the experience. Psychological and biological pathologies and immaturity complicate human moral psychology and it is a standard convention in philosophical moral psychology and philosophy of action to bracket those cases out of the argument.² I follow this convention in the arguments of this chapter and project. Moreover, the argument I advance is focused on analysis of the reflective human understanding of the concept of temptation in *moral* contexts. Thus, “temptation,” unless otherwise noted, will not refer to common, popular, and non-moral uses; for example,

² For exceptions see Richard Holton, “Addiction, Self-Signalling and the Deep Self,” *Mind & Language* 31, no. 3 (2016): 300-13; Neil Levy, “Autonomy and Addiction,” *CJP* 36, no. 3 (2006): 427-47; and Kent Dunnington, *Addiction and Virtue: Beyond the Models of Disease and Choice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011).

“I’m tempted to eat another cookie.” My argument takes no critical view of such locutions but instead focuses more specifically on the concept of temptation that is relevant for careful, analytic moral philosophy and theology. Thus, the intuitions to which I appeal and the case studies are aimed to clarify and argue for a concept of temptation that is applicable for the moral significance of motivations, actions, virtue, and character.

The final and largest methodological component of this chapter is the analytic defense of the definition of temptation that I articulate below. Here one aspect of analytic philosophy’s methodology is overtly deployed. This begins with a formal definition following the conventions of analytic philosophy, using variables to signify important propositions and terms. For this project, (T) will stand for the formalized conception of temptation that is defended; (1), (2), and so on, will signify the necessary conditions that make up this definition; TE will signify the person experiencing temptation, the temptee; X will signify the state of affairs desired; and ϕ will signify some action. The substantiation of (T) will come in the explanation and defense of the individual necessary conditions that are entailed by (T). This argumentative process will follow the method of reflective equilibrium described in Chapter 1, section 3.2. Hence, the argument for (T) flows from the analytic examination and defense of the six necessary propositions that logically follow from (T). The bulk of this chapter, then, is examination and defense aiming toward reflective equilibrium.

1.2 Avoiding Mistakes and Discerning Important Insights in Extant Theories

In what follows I argue for a more robust account of (T) via evaluation of the best available theories. Essentially, the argument progresses by utilizing several key desiderata: (i) analyzing the theories of temptation in the context of data from action theory and moral psychology, fields where the concepts of desire and action are most discussed; (ii) reflecting on how the developing theory here comports with our common moral sense; and (iii) assessing how the developing theory remains consonant with scriptural data and coherent with moral philosophy.

1.2.1 (T) as a Person's "State of Experiencing Temptation"

Agreeing with A.T. Nuyen, Paul Hughes, and Brian Leftow, but *pace* J.P. Day, I take "temptation/tempted" to be a "try-verb."³ Thus, the phenomenon under examination and explication here is the "state of being tempted,"⁴ rather than the state of having succumbed to temptation (as Day's "success-verb" usage would have to mean⁵). In Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, I argued that Day's "success-verb" connotation of temptation is problematic for two reasons (i) it does not comport with intuitive usage and (ii) it would relegate many experiences commonly understood as temptation into something else, and this has the unacceptable consequence of too tightly narrowing the scope of "temptation." Instead, if we understand "temptation" as it is commonly and generally used—a state of experiencing temptation—then the scope is sufficiently wide to include intuitive cases of temptation while not automatically precluding those "temptations" that also sometimes signify someone's having succumbed to temptation. Recall Casey from the beginning of Chapter 2. She is "tempted" to quit grading papers and relax with a favorite book and glass of wine. Yet, if Day's "success-verb" conception is right, then Casey is *not* tempted so long as she continues to grade final papers. This is true for the business owner wrestling with whether they should cheat on their taxes—so long as they are only conflicted and not yet acting, on Day's account, they are not tempted. Both of these run deeply counter to the intuitive moral usage of "tempted." Instead, if "temptation" allows for the experience of conflict without yet having succumbed, then both of these examples count as temptation. Therefore, "temptation" and "tempted" herein reference the state of experiencing temptation without also negating the possibility that "tempted" can also mean "succumbed to temptation."

1.2.2 (T), the Source of Temptation, and the Need for a Tempter

Moreover, with Nuyen, Hughes, and Leftow, I argue that (T) may present from two horizons: internal and external.⁶ That is, the temptation may find its origin, spring, or source either from factors inside or outside the person experiencing (T). It may come from without by other agents and therefore involve a tempter. It may also come from

³ A.T. Nuyen, "The Nature of Temptation," *SJP* 35 (1997): 91-103; Paul M. Hughes, "The Logic of Temptation," *Philosophia* 29 (2002):89-110; Brian Leftow, "Tempting God," *FPh* 31, no. 1 (2014): 3-23.

⁴ Paul M. Hughes, "Ambivalence, Autonomy, and Organ Sales," *SJP* 44 (2006): 241.

⁵ J.P. Day, "Temptation," *AphQ* 30, no. 2 (1993): 175-81.

⁶ Nuyen, "Temptation," 91-3; Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 91; Leftow, "Tempting God," 6.

within the person through some encounter with the external world or by desires entirely internal to the person. Temptation, then, may involve a tempter but (T) does not require an external tempter (contra Day). The business owner internally debating tax fraud does not need another agent to present to them the possibility, means, or enticement of financial benefit in order for them to authentically experience (T). This matches our intuitions about temptation and it also coheres with biblical data: “each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire...” (James 1.14 NIV).

The account of (T) I defend here neither presumes nor assumes the presence of a tempter. In fact, this account will work whether there is a tempter or not. This is because Paul Hughes’s observation is surely right: that the internal experience of the one experiencing temptation is paramount in any investigation of temptation precisely because temptation is fundamentally internal to the person experiencing it regardless of the presence of a tempter.⁷ Ultimately, then, (T) is the internal experience of some person. Properly speaking, one does not experience temptation merely because some offer or enticement is made by a would-be tempter (*pace* Day). When we say, “she was/is tempted,” we are saying, I argue, that there was some internal state of affairs about the person regarding that person’s mental and volitional states, which state of affairs may include some external tempter or not. Thus, temptation does not have the presence of a tempter as a necessary or sufficient condition.

1.2.3 (T) is Fundamentally Connected to Desire

A key insight from the brief consideration of the biblical letter of James, which has the only insight into the nature of temptation, is that temptation involves an internal state of a person, namely desire (Chapter 2, section 2.7). Indeed, this is a running theme in all theories of temptation examined in Chapter 2, suggesting that any reasonable account should begin with the idea that temptation is strongly—and necessarily—tied to desire.

If to desire something is to want that thing, then to be tempted involves wanting something.⁸ This comports with our intuitions about the nature of temptation such that it makes it possible to use various thought experiments and intuition pumps about

⁷ Hughes, “Logic of Temptation,” 89.

⁸ Joel Marks, “Introduction,” in *The Ways of Desire: New Essays in Philosophical Psychology on the Concept of Wanting*, ed. Joel Marks (Chicago: Precedent Pub., Inc., 1986), 2. This entire volume takes “desires” and “wants” to be largely interchangeable, but also notices that various nuances might distinguish the two. “Want” and “desire” are interchangeable for Alfred Mele in *Springs of Action: Understanding Intentional Behavior* (New York: OUP, 1992), 47.

temptation. It is because Casey *wants* both to finish grading and to quit and read that we can begin to understand her situation as possibly (T). If, instead, I was to say, “Casey is tired of grading term papers and she is *intending* to quit before she is done and read a book,” this does not get close enough to approximating temptation. Exchange “intending” with “planning,” “thinking about,” “feeling like,” “rationalizing,” or the like and Casey’s experience will not appear to be temptation. However, substitute “intending” with “wanting” or “desires” and suddenly her experience is much closer to temptation. Not only, then, does the biblical and philosophical data suggest desire/want as the appropriate internal state for temptation but so does reflective intuition. Therefore, desire is the apt internal state for (T). Below I will offer a further argument for desire in section 2 and more development of it in section 3.1.

1.2.4 (T) is a Morally Dubious Experience

A second important insight, not only in the letter of James, but also in the wider biblical data, is that temptation is tied to morality (Chapter 2, section 2.7). This view is also shared by John Owen, J.P. Day, and Adam Pelser. Yet, there is some intuitive conflict with the idea that temptation is or could be immoral. Against the common intuition but in agreement with the biblical data, Owen, Day, and Pelser, I argue that (T) is a morally dubious experience.⁹ The fuller defense of this claim will come in sections 3.3 and 3.5 below but for now I offer a brief line of reasoning. Suppose that temptation is an internal conflict (I argue for this in section 3.4), and this conflict is between a desire for something and some other internal state either cognitive or conative¹⁰ (see sections 2 and 3.5 below), and that part of this conflict involves a moral judgment between the conflicting states such that one is considered morally superior to the other (see section 3.5 below). On this account of (T) the person experiencing temptation is treading on a breakdown of internal moral integrity: their internal states are not aligned, as with the integrous person, but are mismatched with one being morally worse off than the other.

⁹ Although all three connect temptation to immorality, Owen and Day would likely disagree with Pelser. Pelser’s view is more constrained than either Owen’s or Day’s. For Pelser, temptation is connected to vice; and according to his argument, vice is a narrower category than sin/immorality. At this point, I need not adjudicate between the two views, thus I use the vaguer “morally dubious experience.” I use this locution to signal broad agreement with the biblical data, Owen, Day, and Pelser.

¹⁰ Conative states are internal, non-cognitive, non-feeling states that are types of pro-attitudes; e.g., desire, hope, wish, expectation, and so on. (see Connie S. Rosati, “Moral Motivation,” *SEP*, ed., Edward N. Zalta [Winter 2016 edition], <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-motivation/>). It is perhaps Immanuel Kant that offers philosophy the first fullest account of the internal division between cognitive, conative, and feeling (see Leonard D. Katz, “Pleasure,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta [Winter 2016 edition], <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/pleasure/>).

The failure of moral integrity in a person is a morally negative experience. Therefore, if (T) involves a breakdown of moral integrity, then (T) involves a morally negative experience.¹¹ While this conclusion might run counter to general intuition, it comports with the biblical and some philosophical data and, moreover, is consonant with other commitments in moral philosophy and theology. Thus, the idea that (T) is a morally dubious experience is conceptually coherent.

1.2.5 (T) and Psychic Conflict

It is not generally difficult to discern which of our experiences are temptation and which not. A fundamental component of temptation that helps us mark it off from other phenomenon is the kind of internal conflict that comes with temptation. Indeed, temptation seems to be just some kind of internal conflict. This is agreed to by most of the thinkers evaluated in Chapter 2; only John Owen and Adam Pelser are exceptions. It is this conflict that makes sense of the business owner example that I have used above. If they had no “struggle with” or “conflict with” the idea of tax fraud, then they would simply not be tempted. To recall my other example, if Casey had no internal conflict over continuing to grade or quit, then she is not actually “tempted to quit.” Internal conflict is intuitively necessary for temptation. More than that, though, conflict is also necessary in order to sufficiently narrow the scope of “temptation” so that it brackets out the right experiences. I unpack and defend this necessary condition in section 3.4 below.

So far, I have argued that (T) is not merely the state of having succumbed to temptation but also, and chiefly for this project, it is a state of experiencing temptation. Moreover, this state of experience does not require a tempter. Most pointedly, I have contended that (T) necessarily involves some internal conflict and desire. Furthermore, I have given reason for why (T) is a morally dubious experience. Given the arguments for these grounding concepts I can now offer a technical definition and then turn to the analytic defense of the necessary conditions entailed by that definition.

The analytically precise definition, and the defense of its necessary conditions, will allow me in Chapter 4 to compare and contrast (T) to *akrasia*/weakness of will and this will further the main argument of this project in two ways. First it will further clarify the concept of temptation, distinguish it from other related moral concepts, locate it in

¹¹ This does not imply that temptation is sometimes or always morally culpable. In Chapter 4 I will argue that at least some experiences of (T) are morally culpable but not all temptations are blameworthy.

moral philosophy/theology, and, finally, make coherent the account of (T) that I have defended. Second, this will serve, on the one hand, to make clear a major component of the main thesis of this project, and, thus, on the other hand, show the coherency of the main thesis. If the claim is that the possibility of (T) is necessary for the development of moral virtue, then it is required that we have a robust account of (T) so that it can be consistently and coherently interfaced with a neo-Aristotelian account of virtue formation. What follows will begin to fulfill that requirement.

2 Toward a Precise Analytic Definition of (T)

The conception of (T) emerging from critical analysis running through this study centers on desire but not to the exclusion of other psychic states or propositional attitudes, which may also function in the experience of (T). In fact, among the alternative ways to characterize temptation, one approach is to see it in terms of rationality. There are four essays that purport to describe temptation in this vein.¹² Yet, their examinations are not about temptation per se—in fact, not a single essay attempts to offer an analysis of temptation; rather what is in view is *akrasia*.

In Chapter 4 I will argue that (T) is not the same as *akrasia*, but that temptation succumbed-to might, on some occasions, be *akrasia* (see section 2.2). Part of that argument is motivated by the ubiquitous equivocation between temptation and *akrasia* in the philosophical literature on *akrasia*. The bulk and force of my argument against the two being synonymous, however, rests on the general conception of *akrasia* as a rational conflict. If we accept that temptation just is *akrasia*—a kind of rational conflict whereby agents act against their better judgment—then we have an entire class of experiences that are no longer intuitively classifiable as temptation. That is to say, once temptation becomes a rational experience, what then becomes of the regular human experience of desire conflict formerly known as temptation? It can no longer be “temptation” but must be something else. Thus, if temptation is a rational experience, then the most common examples of temptation—for example, Casey and the business owner above—are not temptation. The implication of this is that temptation is a rather more rare occurrence than we typically think. This runs strongly counter to reflective intuition.

¹² Chrisoula Andreou, “Temptation and Deliberation,” *PhSt* 131, no. 3 (Dec. 2006): 583-606; Chrisoula Andreou, “Temptation, Resolutions, and Regret,” *Inquiry* 57, no. 3(2014): 275-92; and John Bigelow, Susan M. Dodds, and Robert Pargetter, “Temptation and the Will,” *APhQ* 27, no. 1 (Jan. 1990): 39-49; Michael Bratman, “Toxin, Temptation, and Stability of Intention,” in *Rational Commitment and Social Justice*, eds., Jules L. Coleman and Christopher W. Morris (New York: CUP, 1998), 59-83.

It is pertinent that temptation as a rational experience faces another problem. Such a view would likely have to accept that human actions are primarily motivated by reason or belief, the so-called Anti-Humean theory of action and moral psychology.¹³ The Anti-Humean theory of human action is defensible but it is also freighted with serious problems, so argue the proponents of the so-called Humean theory of action and moral psychology.¹⁴ Grounding temptation in a conative state, like desire, does not require adoption of either Anti-Humeanism or Humeanism, since both allow that some desires are motivational. Therefore, not only does grounding (T) in desire comport well with the biblical data—no small issue for analytic moral theology—but it also coheres with data in moral philosophy and positions the account quite well for adaptation by competing views in philosophy of action and moral psychology.

Here, then, is the precise analytic definition of (T) that culminates the preceding arguments:

(T)_{def.} Temptation is an internal psychic conflict whereby a temptee TE desires some state of affairs, which state of affairs or the desire for the state of affairs the TE judges to be bad, and simultaneously the TE has some other psychic state that conflicts with the obtaining of or desire for the bad state of affairs and which state is seen as morally superior.

A couple of explanatory points are needed before I draw out the necessary conditions entailed in this definition and offer their defense. First, by “psychic” I mean a broad semantic range of either cognitive, conative, or affective states; where “cognitive” refers to rational states such as belief, reasons, judgment, resolutions, and so on; where “conative” refers to non-rational, pro-attitude states such as desire, hope, wish, intention, and so on; and where “affective” refers to both emotional and appetitive states. Second, “state of affairs” refers to some aspect of the way the world is that can either obtain, be actual, or not obtain, not be actual.¹⁵ States of affairs can be action(s) or ends/goals. For

¹³ Russ Schafer-Landau, “A Defense of Motivational Externalism,” *PhSt* 97 (2000): 267-91; Russ Schafer-Landau, “Moral Motivation and Moral Judgment,” *PhQ* 48 (1998): 353-8; Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe Each Other*, (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1998); John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” *Monist* 62 (1979): 331-50.

¹⁴ Michael Smith, “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” *Mind* 96, no. 381 (Jan., 1987): 36-61; Mark Schroeder, “The Humean Theory of Reasons,” in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, ed., Russ Schafer-Landau, vol., 2 (New York: OUP, 2007), 195-219; Neil Sinhababu, “The Humean Theory of Motivation Reformulated and Defended,” *PhR* 118, no. 4 (2009): 465-500.

Its being called the “Humean theory” does not necessarily indicate that this is precisely what David Hume held, only that this view has affinity with Hume’s views (Smith, “Humean Theory,” 52). For a comparison view on Hume, see Annette C. Baier, “The Ambiguous Limits of Desire,” in *The Ways of Desire*, 52-7.

¹⁵ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (New York: OUP, 1974), 44.

example, a temptee might desire the state of affairs “possessing Bill Gates’s watch” or “verbally degrading my supervisor.” The use of “state of affairs” is to intentionally capture the innumerable variety of possibilities that a temptee might desire in experiencing (T).

In the remainder of the text, following methodological conventions in analytic philosophy, as noted above, I will use the following variables: (T) for the specific account of temptation, TE for “temptee,” the person who is experiencing the state of being tempted; “P” for a general person or agent when there is not a specific experience of temptation being discussed (for example, P desires to eat a cookie); and “X” for that which is desired by TE or P, which may be an object, action(s), or goal— what I call a “state of affairs.” Finally, following the conventions in philosophy of action, I will use the Greek letter “ ϕ ” to signify possible action(s). For example, “TE desires to ϕ ” or “P is ϕ -ing.”

3 The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for the Experience of (T)

It is now time to scrutinize various necessary conditions that are entailed in the precise analytic conception of (T) I have argued for above. This will serve to further substantiate the concept while also making more precise the account of (T). Chapter 4 will build on this foundation by comparing the account of (T) here to the nature of *akrasia*. The argument of that chapter is that *akrasia* and (T) are different but that temptation succumbed-to is sometimes *akrasia*. Furthermore, these necessary conditions work to clarify a chief component of the thesis of this project, namely: *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*. The arguments of this chapter and the next will ensure the puzzle pieces of the final argument fit together consistently and coherently.

Here, then, are the necessary, and potentially jointly sufficient, conditions that follow from my definition. In order to experience (T), a person must experience conditions (1)-(5) conjunctively:¹⁶

- (1) The temptee TE has a desire for some state of affairs, X, or action ϕ .
- (2) TE’s desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action in order to do ϕ or obtain X.
- (3) TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad.

¹⁶ As the following argument line unfolds, these conditions will frequently be cited simply by their number in order to be both efficient and accommodate typical analytic style.

- (4) TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/ϕ , some other psychic state, Y , that conflicts with X 's obtaining, with desiring X , or with ϕ -ing.
- (5) TE sees Y as morally superior to X/ϕ .

Under analysis, it is reasonable to hold that these conditions being met does not suffice for one to have *succumbed* to (T). Rather this set of conditions merely characterizes analytically what “the state of being tempted” is. Whether TE has succumbed to temptation or not is not entailed by this set. For TE to succumb to temptation, one further condition needs to be met:

- (6) TE pursues actualization, in some capacity, of the desire for X or ϕ and gives up, rejects, or ignores the psychic conflict, Y .

When conditions (1)-(5) are met, then (T) is experienced; the addition of condition (6) moves the experience of (T) simpliciter to succumbing/-ed to temptation. This argument is further reinforced by fuller critical evaluation of the proposed conditions—a task to which we now turn. In developing the argument for this I will not focus on temptation succumbed-to. I turn to that in Chapter 4 where I argue the distinction between *akrasia* and (T). Moreover, I contend that conditions (1)-(5) are *necessary* for temptation but only that they *may* be jointly sufficient. It is not the burden of the argument here to establish this logically stricter position.

3.1 Condition (1): TE's Desire for X and the Nature of Desire

In Chapter 2, I criticized the desired-based accounts of temptation for not being clear on their conception of desire by either not offering any account of desire or by presuming some account but offering no explanation or defense. Lest I make the same mistake, I will argue for a particular view of desire. Indeed, there are several ways in which desire might be understood.¹⁷ Therefore, I argue that the best conception of desire for (T) is that (i) “to desire” is “to want;”¹⁸ (ii) desires of this kind can be either “volitive desire” or “appetitive desire;”¹⁹ (iii) these desires may be either intrinsic, extrinsic, hybrid, or realizer desires²⁰ but not merely physical states; and, finally, (iv) the kind of desire

¹⁷ For a clear differentiation of the various theories of desire see Tim Schroeder, “Desire,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2015 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/desire/>.

¹⁸ Alfred Mele, *Springs of Action: Understanding Intentional Behavior* (New York: OUP, 1992), 47.

¹⁹ Wayne Davis, “The Two Sense of Desire,” in *The Ways of Desire*, 63-4.

²⁰ Nomy Arpaly and Timothy Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire* (New York: OUP, 2014), 6-13.

involved in (T) is occurrent (current and active) rather than standing (backgrounded) and not merely fleeting (non-motivating and ephemeral).

3.1.1 *Tempting Desire is to Want*

Put simply, to desire something is to be in a particular psychological state, the state of *wanting* that thing: for P to desire X, P *wants* X.²¹ But, as Harry Frankfurt has contended, the relation between want and desire requires further clarification. I submit that Frankfurt's contribution on this point is crucial to our progress, and I further argue that his distinction between first- and second-order desires adds necessary nuance to my account of (T).²²

To desire X is to have a volitional inclination²³ (that is, to want) for some state of affairs that puts the person in an internal posture that could lead them to act in whatever way that the person believes could bring about X.²⁴ Robert Stalnaker captures the view well: "To desire that [X] is to be disposed to act in ways that would tend to bring it about that [X] in a world in which one's beliefs, whatever they are, were true."²⁵ Thus conceived, I argue for an action-based account of desire that takes as its target states of affairs. Put more simply, to desire X is to want X in a way that disposes the person to act in such a way that the person thinks they will get X.²⁶ In Wayne Davis's account, the sense here is "volitive desire," which he takes to be synonymous with "want," "wish,"

²¹ Joel Marks, "Introduction," in *The Ways of Desire: New Essays in Philosophical Psychology on the Concept of Wanting*, ed. Joel Marks (Chicago: Precedent Pub., Inc., 1986), 2. This entire volume takes "desires" and "wants" to be largely interchangeable, but also notices that various nuances might distinguish the two.

²² Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," in *The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: CUP, 1988), 12-13. Unless otherwise noted all quotations from Frankfurt's works will come from this collection.

²³ Some philosophers distinguish "volition" understood as "will" between a mental faculty that is the power to choose and an attitude or collection of attitudes (cf., Laura W. Ekstrom, "Volition and the Will," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis [Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010], 99-107). Either account will work with my argument, but my argument assumes the view that volition is an attitude or set of attitudes (following Harry Frankfurt). Those who hold to the faculty view can excise "volition" from my arguments without any loss to the argument itself.

²⁴ This argument, then, agrees with the standard view held variously by Nomy Arpaly, Timothy Schroeder, Michael Smith, Alfred Mele, Michael Bratman, whose works are cited throughout the following arguments. Candace Vogler differs from this "psychologism" view and offers instead a "calculative view; see *Reasonably Vicious* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2002).

²⁵ Robert Stalnaker, *Inquiry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 15; quoted in Peter Railton, "That Obscure Object, Desire," *APA* 86, no. 2 (November 2012): 22.

²⁶ This account tracks broadly with G.E.M. Anscombe's view on intention, desire, and action (see *Intention*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1963)), but follows the more nuanced accounts of Wayne Davis, Joel Marks, and Dennis Stampe found in *The Ways of Desire*, as well as Michael Smith, op. cit.

and “would like.”²⁷ While there are nuances of grammatical difference in these different locutions, they all capture the meaning of desire-as-want defended here.

Although at this stage of development here, the important conception of desire is rather broad, it is not just any pro-attitude and must be further parsed.²⁸ The conception of desire I am advancing here is coextensive with Frankfurt’s concept of first-order desires. However, Frankfurt contends that “want” is not coextensive with first-order desire but conceives it as going beyond desire by being a stronger inner state.²⁹ Frankfurt’s distinction between will and desire is that the term “will” is used to mean something more motivating than mere desire: “will”—in the sense of “P wants to ϕ ”—“is the notion of an *effective* desire—one that moves (or will or would move) a person all the way to action”—to ϕ .³⁰

It is important here to observe that the kind of desire pertinent to (T) need not be fully motivating to action.³¹ An inner state is still legitimately a desire state or desire if it “merely inclines an agent in some degree to act in a certain way,” which is Frankfurt’s point regarding first-order desires. Therefore, in the experience of (T), a person’s desire for X need not in all cases (although it may in some) be the kind of desire that *will*, as a matter of fact, move that person all the way to action. All that is needed for temptation’s desire is that the desire *could* lead to action, a point I defend more fully below (section 3.2). Certainly, Frankfurt’s effectively motivating desire fits the parameters of condition (1), but so does the less effective version. That is to say, if condition (1) can be met with a kind of desire that is less motivating than Frankfurt’s “will,” then all the more will it be met by his greater motivating “desire.” My account of (T) accommodates desire as both strongly motivating (*will* act) and weakly motivating (*could* act). The crucial point is that (T) involves a desire that has motivational force. A desire for something that has no actual motivating power for a person is not the kind of desire that would make for temptation. For example, suppose that Stéphane Breitwieser, the world’s greatest art

²⁷ Wayne Davis, “The Two Sense of Desire,” in *The Ways of Desire*, 63-4..

²⁸ Jennifer Hawkins, “Desiring the Bad Under the Guise of the Good,” *PhQ* 58, no. 231 (Apr., 2008): 245.

²⁹ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 14.

³⁰ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 14. Robert Audi, along different lines, also makes a distinction between wanting and desiring but it is clear in his conception that there is inclusive overlap (see “Intending, Intentional Action, and Desire,” in *The Ways of Desire*, 21).

³¹ A pure action-based theory of desire would suggest otherwise: to desire X just is to be disposed to act to obtain X. This seems to be G.E.M. Anscombe’s view (see *Intention*, 68; cf., Schroeder, “Desire,” §1.1). I agree with Arpaly and Schroeder’s argument that in healthy and sane agents some desires do not motivate to action (see *In Praise of Desire* [New York: OUP, 2014], 95-100).

thief, is perusing a local small-town history museum.³² The exhibits are quaint and hardly interest piquing for the professional. There is one particular carving that is nice: it is small and well-detailed. Breitwieser wants the statue for his collection—he desires the statue. But his desire is not very strong. In fact, he is not at all motivated to steal the statue. It is nice, he would not mind having it, but he is not inclined to take it, although he could with ease. Although Breitwieser has a desire for X, it is not enough to constitute (T): Breitwieser is not tempted to take the statue. This makes intuitive sense and is coherent with reflective opinion on desire. Temptation, therefore, requires a kind of desire that is minimally motivating.

Motivating desires sometimes arise in persons unbidden. Indeed, R. Jay Wallace rightly argues that desires can be the kinds of mental experiences that persons just find themselves having;³³ and, that at least some desires are the kinds of volitions that precede deliberation.³⁴ Indeed, one such class of these desires is called “appetitive desires” and these desires are aptly described by Wayne Davis as “hungering,” “craving,” “yearning,” “longing,” and “urge.”³⁵ But it is not simply appetitive desires that sometimes arise unbidden; so do volitional desires. Could unbidden desires constitute a desire that makes up (T)? I contend that the answer is yes. To be in a state of “could be motivated to action,” which state is required for (T), is not relegated only to reflective or bidden volitional or appetitive desire. Both volitional and appetitive desires are the kinds of desires that could motivate to action and are subject to moral judgment—they can be judged to be bad. Unbidden desires, then, can meet conditions (1), be a desire, (2), be a motivating desire, and (3), be a desire that is judged morally bad. Consider again Breitwieser the art thief. This time he is visiting his favorite target, the Art & History Museum in Brussels, Belgium—he has already stolen 13 items from here. This is to be a reconnaissance visit, but he notices an antique chalice and immediately he has a desire to steal it. The desire strikes him unbidden and it is strong enough to potentially move Breitwieser to action: he is tempted to steal the chalice. The intuitive sense this case makes substantiates the argument that even desires that strike unbidden can be the kind involved in (T). So far, then, the kind of desire needed for (T) is that which is minimally

³² For a fascinating write-up on Stéphane Breitwieser see Michael Finkel, “The Secrets of the World’s Greatest Art Thief,” *GQ Magazine*, 28 February 2019, <https://www.gq.com/story/secrets-of-the-worlds-greatest-art-thief>; accessed, 06 July 2020.

³³ R. Jay Wallace, *The View from Here: On Affirmation, Attachment, and the Limits of Regret* (New York: OUP, 2013), 54.

³⁴ Wallace, *The View from Here*, 55.

³⁵ Wayne Davis, “The Two Sense of Desire,” 64.

motivating, can be either volitional or appetitive desires, and these desires can be the kinds that persons simply find themselves having. Yet, there is another class of states tied to appetites that persons just find themselves having, are these the kinds that could be involved in temptation?

Mere appetitive states, like basic hunger, for example, which are generally due to our animal nature shared with the rest of the animal kingdom, do not constitute desire in the precise sense in which we are focusing for (T) and thus do not play a role in the temptation process per se. This means that a person cannot experience (T) on the basis of their mere physical drives per se; instead, these drives must be cognized somehow and made part of one's mental life. In this case, the kind of desire that must be involved for (T) to possibly occur are conative—that is, they are a distinct part of the psychic space from physical appetites. The mere physical urge to eat or procreate, for example, are not the kinds of “wants” that constitute desires necessary for (T). Temptation is an experience, in this sense, limited to persons who have a complex moral psychological structure such that they can differentiate between desires, or objects of desire, that are good or bad. Mere physical states are neither good nor bad. Casey's state of mental exhaustion due to grading is not enough to constitute her being tempted to quit grading. Once it couples with a volitional or appetitive desire, however, (T) is possible. The nature of desire in (T) is now clearer. However, more refinement is needed.

3.1.2 Tempting Desires Can be Intrinsic, Instrumental, or Hybrid

To further clarify the nature of desire involved in (T), we must note the distinction between intrinsic, instrumental, and hybrid desires and determine which if any are the kinds involved in (T). I argue that either intrinsic or instrumental desires could satisfy condition (1) above. As Wayne Davis has contended, “A desire is [instrumental] if its object is desired as a means to something else that is desired, intrinsic if the object is desired as an end in itself.”³⁶ Wanting a blanket is normally an instrumental desire since the blanket is a means to another desire (warmth, comfort, etc.).³⁷ For instance, being

³⁶ Davis, “Two Senses of Desire,” 69.

³⁷ David Chan argues that “instrumental desire” is theoretically redundant because, as such, it doesn't add nuance or clarity to discussion of action and motivation: “Are There Extrinsic Desires?” *Nous* 38, no. 2 (Jun, 2004): 326-50. Chan doesn't deny that conative states motivate in complicated ways, but he does contend that instrumental desire is an unnecessary distinction once we properly have desire and intention understood. This position is troubled. Not least because it runs counter to prevailing scholarship on desire (e.g., see Arpaly and Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire*, 6-14), but more importantly this view is

desirous of joy is intrinsic since, normally, joy is sought for its own sake and not as a means to another end. Some desires are neither merely instrumental or intrinsic but hybrid—they are an integration of instrumental and intrinsic desire. Socrates’s conception of goods in the *Republic* is illustrative here: some things are good independent of the consequences, others are good only in virtue of the consequences, and still others are good in both senses.³⁸ Socrates’s own example of this third category makes my current point. People desire health and knowledge both for their own sakes and also for their consequences, which are also desired (for example, physical well-being and greater competency in the world). Thus, something can be desired for its own sake and for the sake of something else.

Regarding (T), this distinction between intrinsic, instrumental and hybrid desires is illuminated by considering some examples. The idea that an intrinsic desire can qualify as a possible desire that is active in (T) is not likely to be controversial, since most simplistic cases of temptation seem to involve just such desires. For example, Breitwieser’s desire for an ivory carving—he desires it for its own sake and therefore his temptation involves an intrinsic desire. While not as simplistic as intrinsic desire, instrumental desires add needed nuance to make sense of many typical cases of temptation. For example, Breitwieser’s desire to steal a painting is elucidated by attention to the variety of desires operative in him. Typically, a painting might be a kind of thing one owns for its own sake. However, some of Breitwieser’s thefts were for the thrill of getting away with it. The desire to steal the painting was only instrumental to the desire to take something of value and not get caught. Thus, when he is tempted to steal, the operative desire could be instrumental. This makes intuitive sense and is coherent with the arguments forwarded to this point. Temptation, therefore, can involve instrumental desires. Finally, Hybrid desires also comport with this account of (T). Persons can experience (T) based in a desire that is both instrumental and intrinsic. Consider, again, the intrepid art thief Stéphane Breitwieser, who never sells any of the art

problematic because, as a matter of fact, instrumental desires offer a category of nuance to human action that cannot be made sense of by intrinsic desires alone.

³⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 2.357b-358a, trans. GMA Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed., John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 1997), 998-9. See also, Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right & Wrong*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 61-2. For a variant reading of Plato, see Robert Heinaman, “Plato’s Division of Good in the *Republic*,” *Phronesis* 47, no. 4 (2002): 309-35. For convenience I will ignore the interesting and important debate regarding the true source of information in Plato’s writings. Nothing in the present project rides on whether it is actually Plato or Socrates, thus I will variously use either name to reference the work (mostly) written by Plato purportedly to be about his teacher Socrates without indicating in one direction or another whose thoughts I aim to be utilizing.

he steals. His temptation to steal some portrait is not based in a mere instrumental desire to gain more wealth. Yet, he has said that when stealing it is often not the piece of art alone that draws his desire but also the process of the theft.³⁹ When facing temptation to take some artwork, his desire for the art is both instrumental and intrinsic: he desires the art for itself but also for the thrill of stealing. As with both intrinsic and instrumental desires in (T), this is intuitively sensible and coherent with the arguments offered thus far; therefore, (T) can also involve hybrid desires. This is true, as I argue above, so long as these desires have some motivational force for the temptee.

To this stage, I have argued that (T) involves desire understood as “to want” either volitionally or appetitively, but not merely physically; that tempting desire is at least minimally action motivating; and that tempting desire can be either instrumental, intrinsic or a hybrid of both. I have left in the background an assumption that needs attention and defense, namely that the desire in (T) needs to be occurrent rather than standing. I will argue for this in the next section.

3.1.3 Tempting Desires are Occurrent Desires

I contend that the desire required for (T) must be occurrent rather than simply standing. An occurrent desire is one that plays some active role in the mental life of the agent.⁴⁰ More technically, an occurrent desire is “a desire that takes the form of an episodic mental event that a person has at a particular moment when the relevant conditions are satisfied.”⁴¹ Casey’s actively wanting to break from grading such that she’s cognizant of her desire constitutes having an occurrent desire to quit grading. Standing desires, however, “are desires one has that are not playing any role in one’s psyche at the moment.”⁴² Standing desires are “background” wants that “are not motivation encompassing” attitudes; that is, they do not motivate agents to action.⁴³ Suppose that while driving to the art museum, Breitwieser has a desire to leave empty-handed this time but upon entering the Johannes Vermeer exhibit this desire recedes to the background of his psychic space—Breitwieser has a standing desire to leave the museum

³⁹ Finkel, “Secrets of the World’s Greatest Art Thief.”

⁴⁰ Schroeder, “Desire,” §2.4.

⁴¹ Caj Strandberg, “Expressivism and Dispositional Desires,” *APhQ* 49, no. 1 (2012): 83.

⁴² Schroeder, “Desire,” §2.4.

⁴³ Alfred Mele, *Motivation and Agency* (New York: OUP, 2003), 33. To be a “motivation-encompassing attitude,” Mele argues, is for an attitude to include or constitute motivation (34).

free of any purloined art. To this conception of standing desire, Alfred Mele offers a further distinction that will help nuance the argument: a standing desire for X is the ongoing tendency to desire X based on having had frequent occurrent desires for X.⁴⁴ Let us call these further distinguished standing desires “dispositional-standing desires.” Dispositional-standing desires are wants that are psychically inactive and that spring from a history of having occurrent desires of that type. We now have three iterations of desire’s role in a person’s mental life: occurrent desires, standing desires, and standing-dispositional desires.

Occurrent desires are the paradigmatic desires involved in (T): the experience of temptation necessarily involves being aware of one’s desire, thus this desire must occupy active psychic space in the temptee. A dispositional-standing desire is a tendency to desire something and this tendency, along with typical standing desires, holds no active or motivating role in the agent’s psychic space. I argue that desires that play no active role in the person’s mental space could not constitute (T). Standing desires fail to motivate and thus fail condition (2). Failing one of the necessary conditions entails failing to be tempted; thus, standing desires fail to meet the standard of (T). Arguably, Breitwieser has a standing desire to steal art. When he is next in an art gallery and not actively having the desire to steal art, it would be nonsensical to say that he is tempted to steal art based on his non-motivating, psychically inactive tendency to desire to steal art. Temptation based in standing desire is incoherent and therefore false: (T) requires occurrent desire. This occurrent desire in (T), however, can stem from a dispositional-standing desire: a tendency that has formed from frequent occurrent desires of the same type, so long as this occurrent desire is motivational.

In this section I have argued that the kind of desire needed in order to be in a state of (T) is (i) a “want” for something, (ii) it is occurrent, that is, it plays some active role in the psychic life of the temptee, (iii) it is motivational, it is the kind of desire that could motivate to action, and (iv) it can be either intrinsic, instrumental, or hybrid. This section has substantiated the account of (T) I argue for in a way that previous accounts have not. It has clearly located the notion of desire at work in the landscape of philosophy of action and moral psychology. In so doing this section has set the stage for two further arguments: first in Chapter 4 where (T) is compared to *akrasia* and second in Chapter 5 where (T) is located within the process of virtue formation. Both of these forward the ultimate

⁴⁴ Mele, *Motivation and Agency*, 35.

argument of this project. The next section offers further explanation and argument for the second condition: that the tempting desire must be motivating.

3.2 Condition (2): On the Link Between Desire, Motivation, and Action

This section furthers the current argument in two ways. First it further substantiates the precise analytic definition initially defended in section 1.2 by arguing for the consistency of one of the entailed necessary conditions—condition (2). Second, in giving reasons for condition (2), this section argues for the coherency of the constructive account of (T) that I defend. Moreover, this contributes to the project’s thesis by incrementally establishing its coherency: for the thesis to be coherent, each of its parts must be individually consistent. This section will also aid Chapter 4’s argument that (T) and *akrasia* are different but related conceptions by showing that (T) is an experiential state prior to action whereas *akrasia* is a state of action or past action.

Recall Harry Frankfurt’s distinction between first-order desires and “will” discussed in section 3.1.1 above. According to Frankfurt, an agent who “wants”/“wills” something is motivated to, as a matter of fact, act to obtain their desire.⁴⁵ First-order desires, where they are not coextensive with “want”/“wills,” Frankfurt notes, do not necessarily motivate.⁴⁶ I argued that either conception, the “weaker” first-order desires or the “stronger” “will,” meet condition (1), “TE has a desire for X.” However, the question at hand is this: does this weaker conception of desire/wanting meet the requirements of (2): “TE’s desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action”? In this section, I argue that it does meet condition (2). I establish this by arguing that (T) does not require a strong “will motivate” conception of desire but only a weaker “could motivate” conception of desire.

⁴⁵ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 12-13.

⁴⁶ Roy Baumeister construes wanting simply as motivating such that to want or desire something just is to be motivated for that thing; although it is recognized that not all wants/motivations issue in action (cf. “Toward a General Theory of Motivation: Problems, Challenges, Opportunities, and the Big Picture,” *MoEm* 40 [2016]: 1-10).

3.2.1 (T) and Desire's Motivational Strength

It is widely accepted among philosophers of action that desires come in degrees of strength.⁴⁷ Persons experience volitional inclinations in more or less motivating degrees.⁴⁸ Therefore, for a desire to be a temptation, according to my argument, is for it to be of the kind that *could* motivate a person to action. The desire that instigates (T) is not necessarily “the desire which actually prevails, the desire on which the agent acts.”⁴⁹ Desire for X, then, need be only “contingently” motivating rather than “essentially” motivating. Alfred Mele explains the difference between contingently and essentially motivating:

An attitude of an agent S *essentially* encompasses motivation to A if and only if it encompasses motivation to A not only in S's actual situation but also in all possible scenarios in which S has that attitude; and an attitude of an agent S *contingently* encompasses motivation to A if and only if although, in S's actual situation, it encompasses motivation to A, this is not the case in some possible scenarios in which S has that attitude.⁵⁰

Clearly, if a person were to have a desire so weak that it could not motivate them to action at all, then that desire would not meet the demands of (2). Such desires are possible, as R. Jay Wallace has argued: “[o]ne can feel drawn toward a course of action without actually intending to pursue it.”⁵¹ Yet, (T) requires desires with some motivational force, some inclination to act, even if not the kind of desire that “essentially encompasses motivation.”

This argument is reinforced by analyzing a basic case study of the biblical Eve:⁵² Suppose that when the serpent offered to Eve the forbidden fruit with the concomitant option to become like God in a certain respect, Eve had some desire to become like God, but that this desire was so weak she would never act on it (perhaps because she had other

⁴⁷ Schroeder, “Desire,” §2.3. For a dissenting argument see Irving Thalberg, “Questions About Motivational Strength,” in *Actions and Events*, eds. Ernest LePore and Brian McLaughlin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 88-103.

⁴⁸ Alfred Mele, “Motivational Strength,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010), 259-60.

⁴⁹ Mele, “Motivational Strength,” 259.

⁵⁰ Mele, *Motivation and Agency*, 15.

⁵¹ Wallace, *The View from Here*, 54. Arpaly and Schroeder argue for this as well; see Nomy Arpaly and Timothy Schroeder, *In Praise of Desire* (New York, OUP, 2014), 94-97.

⁵² Genesis 3.1-7 tells the story. My argument and analysis do not require or presume any interpretive framework or outcome of the temptation narrative in Genesis 3. As such I do not attend to the varied and vast literature regarding historical, theological, or textual issues in this pericope. I merely use the story as possible human case study.

more strongly motivating desires to obey God's command not to eat the fruit or to fulfill the human task set before her and Adam). In this case, Eve meets condition (1)—she has a desire, X—but she fails to meet condition (2) because her desire is not motivating enough such that it could issue in action (either because it is always overridden by another desire or simply because it is not something she wants to the extent that the volition will move her to action). Thus, in this telling, Eve fails to be tempted and this is intuitively true for any person who has a desire so weak that it could not motivate them to action—that desire could not constitute temptation. Recall Stéphane Breitwieser, the world-renowned art thief mentioned above. If, while skulking through the French painting exhibit, he sights Georges de la Tour's *The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds*, and has a desire to steal it but the desire is very weak—too weak to even slightly motivate him to steal it—then Breitwieser is not tempted to steal the painting. These two cases indicate that the mere presence of desire does not constitute (T). Rather, the desire that meets condition (1) must also be the kind that could motivate to action, thus meeting condition (2).

3.2.2 (T) and the Metaphysical or Epistemic Possibility of Obtaining X

To further support my argument, let us consider an important alternative set of arguments that turn on an important distinction between metaphysical and epistemic possibility in regard to (T). One side of the argument contends that a temptee need not have the metaphysical possibility (that is, ability) of satisfying a desire for X in order for (T) to occur, but only the epistemic possibility (that is, involving thought or belief) of satisfying a desire for X in order for (T) to occur.⁵³ In contrast, the other side contends that both metaphysical possibility and epistemic possibility are necessary for (T) to occur.⁵⁴

The latter, more stringent, view—call it the “ability+belief view”—contends that to be in a state of experiencing temptation there must be both (i) a desire that is metaphysically able to be satisfied in the actual world and (ii) an epistemic attitude regarding the metaphysical possibility of the satisfaction of the desire for X. For example, in order for Eve to be tempted it must be metaphysically possible for her to obtain her desire for X and she must believe that it is possible to obtain X. The former, more permissive, view—call it the “belief-only view”—by contrast, contends that

⁵³ Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 147-53.

⁵⁴ David Werther, “The Temptation of God Incarnate,” *RelStud* 29, no. 1 (Mar. 1993): 47-50.

metaphysical ability is not necessary for (T) but rather all that is needed is epistemic possibility—the temptee needs merely *believe* (even if mistakenly) that the ability to satisfy their desire for X is an actual-world possibility. This epistemic state is possible even if there is no metaphysical or actual-world possibility. Which view is condition (2), and the arguments of this chapter, most consistent with, the “ability+belief view” or the “belief-only view”?

Returning to the case study of David and Bathsheba (adapted from 2 Sam 11 and used in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2), I argue that it shows the “belief-only view” is all that is needed for an experience of (T). Careful reflection on our informed intuitions affirms that (T) does not require metaphysical ability plus epistemic possibility. David, not the Israelite king but a regular soldier, is walking the city walls one evening and spots Bathsheba bathing on her rooftop. He has an occurrent, volitional, and motivating desire to sexually liaise with her—David meets conditions (1) and (2). As it turns out, however, what David sees is not a woman bathing but a play of shadows, the setting sun, and drying laundry. He thinks he sees a woman bathing, and, further, he believes he knows who she is—his commanding officer’s wife. Although David believes it is possible that he could rendezvous with Bathsheba, as it turns out, he is not only looking at the wrong house, with no actual person present, Bathsheba, unbeknownst to David, has recently died. There is no actual-world possibility of obtaining David’s desire. Yet, despite that, David is experiencing (T) (let us assume the other conditions are met).

If we accept that (T) requires the “ability+belief view,” then we are left with an intuitively absurd conclusion, namely that some “temptations” are not temptation at all but some other phenomenon. For example, Justin is unwittingly a part of a social science study on honesty. The experimenters in the study have created a hologram of a dropped wallet that appears quite real and full of money. Part of the experiment includes a clear plexiglass partition before the hologram that is so clear and seamless participants cannot see it. It is impossible to pick up the wallet: it does not exist nor is access to the spot possible. As Justin walks along, he sees the wallet and he has a desire to take the wallet (condition (1) is met). No one is around; it is a secluded area; he believes he is capable of picking up the wallet, and with the weight of student loans pressing, his desire is motivating (condition (2) is met). Yet, Justin is conflicted: he believes his desire to take the wallet is bad (meeting condition (3)) and he desires to be honest, which he knows is morally better (meeting conditions (4) and (5)). Justin is not experiencing (T) if the “ability+belief view” is true because Justin has no actual-world possibility of obtaining

his illicit desire. But that is intuitively absurd: Justin's case is a "textbook" instance of (T). Therefore, in order to experience (T), a temptee need only *believe* that their desire is possibly obtainable in the actual world. Temptation, thus, does not require the more stringent "ability+belief view" but only the more permissive "belief-only view."

In this section I have argued that condition (2), "TEs desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action," requires only that the temptee's desire have some motivational force. If a desire is not motivating at all, then it is not a desire implicated in temptation. Furthermore, I have argued that (T) does not require that the desire for X be metaphysically possible. Rather, all that (T) requires is that the temptee believe that their desire for X is metaphysically possible. This section establishes the broad scope of consistency that this condition has with reflectively intuitive cases of temptation and, therefore, further argues for the coherency of the account as a whole. The next section will examine condition (3), "TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad."

3.3 Condition (3): Moral Judgment and Objective Morality in (T)

This section argues that Condition (3)—"TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad"—is self-consistent and essential for being in the state of (T).⁵⁵ This contributes to the argument of the chapter by showing that the account of (T) argued for here is coherent. The following argument unfolds in two parts. First, I defend the claim that "X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, as bad" is necessary for (T) and that this condition makes sense of the intuition that temptation is morally troublesome. Second, I argue that belief rather than knowledge is required for (T). Finally, I address a line of objection to this condition and argue it fails to defeat it. Together, these arguments show that condition (3) is coherent.

⁵⁵ As I argue in section 3.2, my view of desire is informed by the leading theory of desire called "the action-based theory of action" (Schroeder, "Desire," §1.1). This view of desire leaves open the relation between desire and pleasure and desire and goodness (Timothy Schroeder, "Desire and Pleasure," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action* [Malden, MA: Blackwell, Pub., 2010], 115). Thus, my argument does not depend on the falsity of the good-based theory of desire (for a defense of this view see Graham Oddie, *Value, Reality and Desire* [New York: OUP, 2005]), but my argument would need revision if the good-based theory is true (for an argument for action-based desire see Michael Smith, "The Humean Theory of Motivation, op. cit."). My argument is more friendly to the pleasure-based theory of desire (for a defense of this view see Galen Strawson, *Mental Reality*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010]) and my argument needs only slight changes if the reader is committed to the pleasure-based theory of desire.

3.3.1 *The Moral Dubiousness of (T)*

The third necessary condition is that the person believes the desired state of affairs is bad.⁵⁶ A major factor distinguishing tempting desires from other desires is that there is a normative judgment made by the person about either the desire for X, action- ϕ , or X itself, or perhaps all three. Under this description, (T) is an internal conflict between a desire and a moral judgment, which judgment is seated in some other psychic state. Thus, it is an internal phenomenological conflict within the person's consciousness. Furthermore, it is this conflict that gives (T) its "morally dubious" nature.⁵⁷ Therefore, I will argue that the badness of X, the desire for it, or both serves two needed functions in temptation: (i) it is a distinguishing factor that brackets temptation off from other psychic conflicts and (ii) it makes sense of both the intuition that temptation is sometimes morally problematic and the biblical data that connects temptation to evil.

Temptation is not the only conflict of desire that persons experience. In Harry Frankfurt's argument for first- and second-order desires, he frequently describes various desire conflicts, none of which does he assign to temptation and many of which are not obvious cases of temptation.⁵⁸ To borrow an example from Richard Swinburne, the "desire to meet Linda in London on Monday evening and a desire to meet Elspeth in Edinburgh on Monday evening"⁵⁹ are conflicting desires, but this is not a case of (T). The presence of desire conflict alone is not enough to constitute (T). It is a peculiar kind of conflict that accrues in (T). There are innumerable kinds of psychic conflicts that involve desire. Therefore, in order to mark off an appropriate subset of these experiences as temptation, some distinctives must attach to (T) that do not attach to other conative conflicts. I contend that it is the morally dubiousness of the fundamental desire that separates (T) from other experiences of desire conflict. Indeed, this makes intuitive sense of the casual and ubiquitous use of "temptation" to describe, for example, the desire to

⁵⁶ I use the very general "bad" so as not to encumber the argument with normative or theological debates. Yet, it is "bad" as in "immoral." I avoid other locutions of negative moral value for the following reasons. If "wrong" were used, then this might unduly locate the argument in deontological territory. Or, if "sin" were used this would both unnecessarily constraint the account theologically and narrow the scope of the badness to be coextensive with sin. Thus, I agree with Adam Pelsler's argument against connecting "sin" to temptation, but also disagree that the correct connection is virtue, as that would, again, too constrain the account from possible applicability to other ethical frameworks. Ultimately, I hold to the virtue ethical framework, and defend this is in Chapter 5, but want the account of (T) argued for here to coherent with a variety of normative and theological positions.

⁵⁷ Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 89.

⁵⁸ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will," 8, 9, 11-13.

⁵⁹ Richard Swinburne, "Desire," *Philosophy* 60, no. 4 (1985): 437.

eat another cookie⁶⁰ or have cake instead of fruit.⁶¹ What marks these cases off as experiences of (T) in the mind of the temptee is that they think that the desire is illicit. Thus, judgment that X, ϕ , the desire for X, or all three is bad is necessary to (T), in part, because it is this judgment that makes the psychic conflict *temptation* and not some other kind of conflict.

Another argument for the necessity of the morally negative judgment toward X, ϕ , the desire for X, or all three is that it is this judgment that, in part, undergirds the notion that (T) is morally problematic. Not only does this judgment distinguish (T) from other internal conflicts but it also substantiates the intuition that (T) is sometimes morally bad. A couple of examples argue for this. The first example will argue that without the negative moral valuation, the reflectively intuitive moral weight of temptation is missing. The second example will argue that it is the moral judgment itself that contributes to the moral dubiety of temptation. Both of these arguments will be reaffirmed in section 3.5 below.

Having narrowly passed the social science experiment involving the holographic wallet, Justin has just paid the coffee shop barista and notices that he has received too much back in change. It is no small error: he received back more than he paid by double. Justin has a desire to keep the extra money—meeting condition (1). It is obvious that the barista has missed the error and no one else notices the mistake. He also remembers his student loan payment and he is motivated to keep the extra money; thus, he meets condition (2). While he does not think his desire to keep the money is bad, he does not prefer his desire and he is concerned about the possible social stigma if others found out that he kept the money—Justin meets condition (4): he has a psychic state that conflicts with his desire to keep the money. This case is intuitively troubling. On the one hand, we want to say Justin is tempted but, on the other hand, something is wrong because this is not like temptation. I argue that what makes this case problematic for temptation is the missing element of moral evaluation. Merely not preferring a desire that is motivating and conflicts with another psychic state is short of what is needed for (T). This would be true for the range of attitudes that Justin might take toward his desire to keep the money if those attitudes fail to also involve a negative moral judgment. We might judge that Justin is himself morally problematic, but it is odd to conclude that he is

⁶⁰ Leftow, “Tempting,” 4-5.

⁶¹ Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Jaideep Sengupta and Suresh Ramanathan, “Recalling Past Temptations: An Information-Processing Perspective on the Dynamics of Self-Control,” *JCR* 35, no. 4 (2008), 587, 594.

experiencing (T). If, however, his dislike changes to a negative moral judgment, then his scenario obviously becomes (T). This shows that condition (3) is necessary.

Aside from casual uses, “temptation” describes an experience that is itself morally freighted. Rarely is “I’m tempted to eat a second slice of pie” considered morally problematic, but neither is “I’m tempted to cheat on my spouse” considered morally neutral. This second thought experiment argues that condition (3) makes sense of why the state of being tempted is morally dubious: because paradigm cases of temptation involve states of affairs that are considered morally bad by those experiencing temptation. When David sees Bathsheba and desires a sexual encounter with her, this desire alone is not enough to constitute (T). After all, this desire might simply be expressive of his animal nature, a simple sexual appetite. However, when the situation is filled in, the morally problematic nature comes out. David desires to have sex with Bathsheba—meeting condition (1). This is not a mere fleeting, physical urge; it is an occurrent, volitional, and motivating desire; thus, it meets condition (2). As a committed Hebrew, David knows that sex with another person’s spouse is morally forbidden and, therefore, he believes his desire for Bathsheba is bad—David meets conditions (3), (4), and (5). What makes David’s experience of temptation morally problematic cannot only be the mere fact that he has a sexual desire for Bathsheba, even a volitional, motivating desire. Rather, it is problematic in light of condition (3): David desires something that he judges to be bad. The point of this argument is not that David is morally culpable, rather it is only that David’s experience of (T), which in form if not detail is paradigmatic, is itself morally troubling.

Here is a second line of argument for (T) being morally dubious that parallels philosophical reflection on moral integrity.⁶² I contend that (T) is a kind of threat to the TE’s moral integrity (here “moral integrity” is understood as a quality of a person⁶³) and as such is a morally dubious experience. To act with moral integrity is to act without internal conflict regarding one’s value judgments. As Morten Møgelssen argues, “Moral integrity implies having an internally consistent set of basic moral ideas and principles,

⁶² The literature most helpful here comes from discussions of conscientious objection in medical ethics and bioethics. See especially, Morten Magelssen, “When Should Conscientious Objection be Accepted?” *JME* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 18-21; Mark R. Wicclair, “Conscientious Objection in Medicine,” *Bioethics* 14, no. 2 (2000): 205-27; and Vicki D. Lachman, “Conscientious Objection in Nursing: Definition and Criteria for Acceptance,” *MEDSURG Nursing* 23, no. 3 (May-June 2014): 196-98.

⁶³ Grant R. Gillet, “Informed Consent and Moral Integrity,” *JME* 15, no. 3 (1989): 121.

and being able to live and act in accordance with these.”⁶⁴ In other words, moral integrity is consistency in one’s moral judgments, beliefs, desires, and actions—it is the state of being undivided or whole.⁶⁵ Moral integrity is what Harry Frankfurt calls, in a different context, “wholeheartedness”—a person who is undivided within themselves: their desires and will are aligned.⁶⁶ A person with moral integrity does not believe their desires run counter to their other normative psychic states. The experience of (T) is a threat to moral integrity in that it requires an internal divide that mirrors the breakdown of moral integrity. As Lynne McFall contends, the person who succumbs to temptation suffers a loss to their moral integrity.⁶⁷ The argument here is not that temptation itself is a lack of moral integrity. Rather, we should notice that moral integrity has already been fractured prior to temptation and the experience of temptation further threatens to undermine a person’s already fragile moral integrity. This is how the one who overcomes temptation has stronger moral integrity than the one who succumbs—yet they both are suffering a loss of wholeheartedness.⁶⁸ Thus, (T) is a morally dubious experience because it is at once a moral experience involving an “outlaw”⁶⁹ desire and is simultaneously predicated on an internal moral conflict.

This section has argued that condition (3) is a necessary condition for (T) because (i) condition (3) serves to differentiate (T) from other desire-psychic conflicts, and (ii) condition (3) gives justification to the intuition that (T) both involves moral desires and moral judgment and is an experience that is morally weighted.

3.3.2 *Believing or Knowing that X is Bad in (T)*

In analyzing this phenomenological conflict, I emphasize the subjective “believes” in condition (3) because it is not necessary that X, ϕ , or the desire for X be objectively immoral, although it may be. Rather, as I argue in this section, it is only necessary that the person *believe it to be the case* that one or more is immoral in order to experience

⁶⁴ Magelssen, “Conscientious Objection,” 18.

⁶⁵ Lynne McFall, “Integrity,” *Ethics* 98, no. 1 (1987): 7.

⁶⁶ Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness,” in *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, eds. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza (Ithaca, NY: CUP, 1993), 176; cf. Damian Cox, Marguerite La Caze, and Michael Levine, “Integrity,” *SEPI*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2017 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/integrity/>, §1. For a view different than Frankfurt’s see Gabriele Taylor, “Integrity,” *PAS* 55 (1981): 143-59.

⁶⁷ McFall, “Integrity,” 7, 9.

⁶⁸ McFall, “Integrity,” 7.

⁶⁹ Cox, La Caze, and Levine, “Integrity,” §1.

(T). Paul Hughes poses the question this section answers, “does temptation require knowledge or merely the belief that the object of temptation is evil?”⁷⁰ I argue that knowledge is not required and, thus, only belief is required.

The first reason that belief is enough for condition (3) is because knowledge is too stringent of a requirement. While there is much debate in philosophy regarding the nature of knowledge, the traditional account of “to know” is that this mental state requires “justified true belief.”⁷¹ In order to know something, then, a person must have a belief that is both justified and true. Thus, for TE to know that X is bad is for TE to believe it is bad and for that belief to be both true and justified. While settling the requirements of justification is hard enough, I argue that it is the truth requirement that suggests (T) does not require knowledge. Suppose Casey is conflicted between her desire to finish grading papers and her desire to quit and relax. If (T) requires knowledge then Casey must know that her desire to quit is immoral and this requires the truth of the following proposition, *p*, “quitting and relaxing at this time and in this way is immoral.” The truth of *p*, however, depends upon the truth of other very contentious ethical claims. First, in order for *p* to be true, then ethical objectivism or relativism is true and moral anti-realism is false.⁷² Yet, the mere experience of (T) cannot ride on whether this sophisticated ethical debate is settled truthfully in the mind of the TE. Second, in order for *p* to be true, then some normative ethical theory is true, and Casey is aware of it such that she is justified in believing that *p* is true. Again, the experience of (T) cannot be determined by TE’s justified belief in complex and contested ethical theory.⁷³ Not only are these two areas of ethics highly contentious among dedicated philosophers in the field, very few non-specialists are aware of the prevailing theories let alone the detailed arguments. Therefore, if knowledge is required for (T), then for anyone to be tempted they will need to be moral philosophers. This standard is absurdly high and entirely counterintuitive and therefore not required. All Casey needs in order to be tempted is the belief that her desire to quit and relax is bad.

⁷⁰ Hughes, “Logic of Temptation,” 95.

⁷¹ Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa and Matthias Steup, “The Analysis of Knowledge,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2018 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/knowledge-analysis/>, §1; cf. Matthias Steup and Ram Neta, “Epistemology,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/epistemology/>, §2.3.

⁷² On the arguments for/against ethical objectivism, relativism, and anti-realism see Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd ed. (New York: OUP, 2015), chs. 19-21.

⁷³ On the debate between various normative theories see Marcia W. Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, *The Methods of Ethics*, Great Debates in Philosophy, ed. Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 1997).

The second reason that belief is enough for condition (3) is related to the first: the strict standard of knowledge will entail that nearly all paradigm cases of temptation are not (T) but some other phenomenon.⁷⁴ Imagine, for example, that Jesse is holding to a religious fast and believes that it is immoral to eat meat on Wednesdays and Fridays. Let us suppose that his belief is mistaken. He is at a friend's house one Friday evening who has prepared his favorite dish, Beef Wellington. Jesse is conflicted: he genuinely believes it would be wrong to eat the meat but he sincerely wants to. If knowledge is required, then Jesse is not tempted to break his fast—by eating Beef Wellington—because Jesse fails to *know* that it is wrong to eat meat on Fridays. Paul Hughes's response is surely correct, "But this is extremely counterintuitive, for what else could it be but temptation?"⁷⁵ Therefore, (T) does not require knowledge.

3.3.3 *An Objection to Condition (3): Good Desires Believed to be Bad*

An objection threatens condition (3) that has fundamentally to do with TE's belief that X is bad. If we accept condition (3) then incoherency threatens the account of (T), says the objection. Here is the problem: condition (3) allows for a person to believe something is bad that is intuitively and uncontroversially good and therefore to be "tempted" by something that is actually good. According to my argument, the objection claims, (T) can occur with desires for that which is good and, at the same time, be a morally dubious experience. There lurks in the account of (T) an intuitive incoherency because of condition (T).

To give concreteness and clarity to the objection, let us envision an example in which a TE desires, X: to save a small child drowning in a shallow lake. Suppose further that this situation meets the criteria for (T) presented earlier (section 3): TE's desire for X is of the kind that could motivate to action (satisfying condition (2)). Yet, suppose we add that TE believes saving the child is bad (satisfying condition (3)); that TE has some other internal state, Y, against acting in order to bring about bad states of affairs (satisfying condition (4)); and that TE also sees Y as morally superior to X (satisfying condition (5)). On my account of (T), TE is tempted, and to be tempted is a morally dubious experience (section 3.3.1 above). Yet, desiring to save a drowning child is neither intuitively a temptation nor morally dubious. How is this not intuitively

⁷⁴ Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 95; the example that follows is adapted from Hughes.

⁷⁵ Hughes, "Logic of Temptation," 96.

incoherent and therefore a telling counterexample? I argue that this account of (T) is not incoherent, even if it has some counterintuitive aspects. That which is counterintuitive in my account, I argue can be given reasons that bring the account back to reflective equilibrium.

My defense against this potential objection has two lines of approach. First, my account of (T) coheres with, and improves on, the reflective judgments of previous analytic accounts. With a single exception, all previous accounts of temptation have been subjective.⁷⁶ All subjective accounts of temptation are susceptible to the above potential objection given their locating temptation almost wholly inside the TE's psychic life.⁷⁷ Thus, if the prevailing considered accounts agree, then it is the counter-intuition that is suspect. That is, it may be that it is the counter-intuition that is problematic, given the robust considered reflection in favor of the theory that produce the purported counter-intuition.

The second line of response to the objection is to accept that TE's experience is counter-intuitive and choose to "bite the bullet." In philosophical analysis, to "bite the bullet," is to remain committed to a claim even in the face of counter-intuitive evidence.⁷⁸ Given the arguments of this chapter and the critical evaluations in Chapter 2, the account of (T) that I defend is more explanatorily powerful than the others. It, therefore, is the best current analytic explanation of temptation. If it entails a counter-intuitive claim, then the best coherent path is to "bite the bullet" and accept that both the account of (T) is true and the above example is counter-intuitive—but not enough to defeat the arguments in favor of this account of (T). I accept that being "tempted" to save a drowning child is a counter-intuitive description of (T). However, if (T) is fundamentally a subjective experience that involves a person's morally judging their desire and the person judges against their desire, so long as the other conditions are fulfilled, then it is an experience of (T). This remains true even for examples that are problematic. Therefore, the above objection does not show that condition (3) is incoherent or that the account of (T) argued for here is inherently troubled.

⁷⁶ Adam Pelsner's argues for an objective account of (T) ("Temptation, Virtue, and the Character of Christ," 81-101). See Chapter 2, section 2.7.2 for my critical evaluation of Pelsner.

⁷⁷ Paul Hughes explicitly recognizes this potential problem and therefore argues that there is no necessary connection between temptation and immorality ("Logic of Temptation," 97-104).

⁷⁸ Alfred Mele, "Manipulation, Moral Responsibility, and Bullet Biting," *JE* 17, no. 3 (2013): 170. Caspar Hare lists five ways "bullet biting" is used by philosophers (see *The Limits of Kindness* [New York: OUP, 2013], x-xi).

This section has argued for the self-consistency and global coherency of condition (3), “TE believes X/φ or the desire for X/φ, or both is bad.” There were three movements to this defense: First, I argued that condition (3) is necessary in order to distinguish experiences of (T) from other experiences of psychic conflict. In addition, I contended that the moral judgment involved in (T) explains the intuition that temptation is sometimes morally dubious, and this comports with the biblical account of temptation. Second, I forwarded the argument that (T) only requires that the TE believe that X is bad—*knowledge* of the X’s being bad is not required. And, third, I offered a defense against the objection that condition (3) leads to a defeating counter-intuitive claim. These three lines of argument show that condition (3) is both coherent and necessary for an experience of (T), which further goes to show that the larger argument I make in this chapter is consistent and coherent. The next section argues for the coherency and necessity of condition (4): “TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/φ, some other psychic state, Y, that conflicts with X’s obtaining, with desiring X, or with φ-ing.”

3.4 Condition (4) and the Conflicted Psychic State in (T)

To further establish condition (4) as necessary to (T), I argue for two positions: first, in conjunction with section 3.3.1 above, psychic conflict is necessary to (T); and second, a Frankfurtian hierarchy of desires contributes to the conception of (T) defended here. As with the previous sections, the arguments here show the conceptual veracity and coherency of (T).

3.4.1 *On Why Psychic Conflict is Essential to (T)*

Essential to (T) is a conflict of desire—that is, a state in which a desire is in conflict with another mental state of the temptee. As I note above in section 2, “psychic state” is used synonymously with “mental state” in order to signify a broad range of cognitive, conative, or affective states a person may have, which states could play a role in moral motivation. Thus, (T) is an internal conflict between a person’s desire and some internal state opposed to that desire. This account of (T) is limited in one way and open in another way. First, it is limited by holding that (T) initially has to do with desire rather than belief, reason, intention, or some other psychic state.⁷⁹ In this sense, the theory I

⁷⁹ That desires differ from reasons is both intuitive and uncontroversial in the philosophy of action scholarship. However, the relationship between desires and beliefs and desires and intentions is more contentious. I differentiate desire both from beliefs and intentions. For an argument that desires are beliefs

advance limits what counts as the experience of temptation in order to distinguish it from other similar internal conflict experiences (see section 3.3.1)—for example, from weakness of will or *akrasia* (I articulate this distinction more fully in Chapter 4, section 2.2). Second, the account is open in that (T) also includes a person's other psychic states like belief(s), reason(s), intention(s), resolutions, or other cognitive, conative, or affective states. In this second sense, the theory of (T) that I advance is open in allowing that many other internal psychic states within a person may conflict with the desire for X. Put more formally, in an experience of (T), TE has a desire for X or to ϕ , believes X/ ϕ is bad and TE's desire for X *must conflict* with another of TE's psychic states (for example, TE's reason(s), desire(s), intention(s), etc. against X's obtaining or ϕ -ing). To conceive of (T) as having this structure appropriately demarcates it from other experiences of moral psychic conflict like *akrasia*, pragmatic conflicts, inconsistent moral belief sets, practical irrationality, or conflicting moral intention, to name only a few. Furthermore, I argue that this conception of (T) captures a fundamental intuition about temptation, namely, that is it a *conflicted* state.

Why is conflict essential to temptation? It is because of the oddity in supposing that a person does precisely what they wanted, with no internal conflicts at all, and yet was tempted. Following Harry Frankfurt on this point, to say that someone acted “wholeheartedly”—with their first- and second-order desires aligned—and, at the same time, was tempted in their action is deeply counter-intuitive which signals conceptual confusion.⁸⁰ Suppose Justin is what we might call a “passive actor.” He fits Frankfurt's descriptive of a person who “take[s] no evaluative attitude toward the desires that incline him to act.”⁸¹ This kind of person would not experience any internal conflict toward their motivating desires. If Justin desires to steal a wallet and, as a passive actor, experiences no internal conflict, then Justin is not *tempted* to steal the wallet—he just desires to steal it *simpliciter*. The oddity is indicative of the error in claiming that temptation sans conflict is possible. However, being odd is not the only reason that temptation is typically thought to necessarily involve conflict. If we analyze the ordinary, non-moral

see Philip Pettit, “Humeans, Anti-Humeans, and Motivation,” *Mind* 96, no. 384 (Oct, 1987): 530-33. Against this conception see Michael Smith, “The Humean Theory of Motivation,” *Mind* 96, no. 381 (Jan, 1987): 36-61. For an overview of the arguments for/against desire as intentions see Alfred Mele, “Intention,” in *Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010), 108-113.

⁸⁰ Harry Frankfurt, “Identification and Wholeheartedness,” in *The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: CUP, 1988), 165; see also, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 5-9.

⁸¹ Frankfurt, “Identification,” 164.

understanding of the experience of temptation as typically reflected in our concepts and language, then (T) is an experience that on all accounts involves some internal clash. For example, when Jesse declares, “I am tempted to have another slice of pie!” we intuitively and reflexively understand that he is expressing an internal conflict about eating more pie. Thus, built into the notion of temptation is some kind of conflict and this is true whether the notion be a common, casual, non-moral usage or whether the notion is in the domain of reflective moral philosophy.

3.4.2 *Hierarchy of Desires and Psychic Conflict in (T)*

Harry Frankfurt’s hierarchy of desires offers important nuance to the account of temptation as a particular kind of internal conflict. According to Frankfurt’s hierarchy, there are two orders of desire: first and second.⁸² First-order desires, discussed above in section 3.3.1, are desires for non-conative states of affairs. Second-order desires are desires about another conative state: first-order desires.⁸³ His hierarchy presents us with a few options in understanding the psychic conflict, which is fundamental to (T): the conflict could be between (i) two first-order desires, (ii) between first- and second-order desires, and (iii) between second-order desires. The simplest of the three options is (i) a conflict between two first-order desires. A temptation of this kind pits a first-order desire for X, or action ϕ , against another first-order desire that is either $\sim X/\sim\phi$ or some other first-order desire, Y, that is inconsistent with X’s obtaining or with ϕ -ing (assuming the other conditions are met). David’s temptation to rendezvous with Bathsheba from above shows the truth of this. David might be experiencing just this kind of inconsistent first-order desire set: (possibly) he has both a first-order desire for sex with Bathsheba and a first-order desire to obey the law prohibiting adultery.

However, it could be argued that it is possible that David’s conflict is between first- and second-order desires. On this view, his sexual desire for Bathsheba may be the first-order desire where his other desire is to be the kind of person who does not have desires that conflict with the law—in this case, to be the kind of person who does not desire adultery. Here the second-order or “higher” desire ranks over the lesser, “lower”

⁸² Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 5-20. Frankfurt’s argument has been the subject of many debates. One core problem for his view, which need not be settled here as nothing in my argument rides on this objection, is that it is liable to manipulation cases; cf. James Stacey Taylor, “Introduction,” in *Personal Autonomy: New Essays on Personal Autonomy and Its Role in Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, ed. James Stacey Taylor (New York: CUP, 2005), 1-32.

⁸³ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 7-9.

desire—that is, it is a desire about desire. Like the previous first-order conflict, this first-to-second-order conflict makes good intuitive sense, and this suggests its coherency. Thus, the psychic conflict required for (T) could be first-to-first-order conflict or first-to-second-order conflict.

I argue further that (T) can consist in second-to-first-order desires and between second-order desires, but these kinds of temptation are more complicated. In her revision of Frankfurt's hierarchical structure, Eleonore Stump adds a nuance to second-order desires that is missing in Frankfurt's account.⁸⁴ Stump argues that “an effective second-order desire is one which moves the agent all the way to the action of making the corresponding first-order desire his will.”⁸⁵ This adds a necessary motivational element to second-order desires, which Frankfurt limited to “reflective self-evaluation,”⁸⁶ that enables them to meet condition (2)—the desire must be the kind that could motivate to action.

To make this kind of temptation apparent, let us return to the example of Stéphane Breitwieser, the world-renowned art thief. Given that Breitwieser has a standing desire to steal art, it would not be an unreasonable stretch to suppose that he also has a desire to want to steal art—that he has a second-order desire to be the kind of person who desires art thieving. Let this be condition (1): Breitwieser has a second-order desire, X, to be the kind of person who wants to steal art. Suppose his second-order desire is strong enough that it could motivate him to action—the action of making the corresponding first-order desire to steal art. Breitwieser, then, also meets condition (2). In a rare clear-eyed moment, he believes his desire to be the kind of person who wants to steal art is bad—meeting condition (3). Breitwieser has a newly formed first-order desire in his moment of moral clarity: a desire not to steal, which he takes to be morally superior to his motivating second-order desire. This meets conditions (4) and (5). Although this might not be a paradigmatic example of (T), it meets all the necessary conditions and does so while remaining conceptually coherent. Therefore, it is possible to experience (T) with a second-to-first-order conflict. Of course, if this is true, then it

⁸⁴ Eleonore Stump, “Sanctification, Hardening of the Heart, and Frankfurt's Concept of Free Will,” *JPh* 85, no. 8 (1988): 395-420.

⁸⁵ Stump, “Sanctification,” 401. Recall Frankfurt's distinction between “desire” and “will”/“volition” where a “will”/“volition” is a desire that moves the agent all the way to action and a “desire” is a conative state that does not necessarily move to action although it is motivational. Stump retains that distinction.

⁸⁶ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will,” 9; David Velleman conceptualizes the hierarchy of desires differently than Frankfurt but agrees that they are non-action motivating; cf. David Velleman, “The Possibility of Practical Reason,” *Ethics* 106, no. 4 (1996): 717.

would follow, *mutatis mutandis*, that second-to-second-order temptation is plausible and coherent. That kind of temptation would center on a conflict regarding what kind of person the temptee desires to be.

In this section I have argued that the desire for X and a conflicting psychic state Y is necessary for (T). I have also contended that the conflict in (T) can be either first-to-first-order conflict, first-to-second-order conflict, second-to-first-order conflict, or second-to-second-order conflict. This section, therefore, serves as another argumentative pillar substantiating the conceptual coherency of (T). In the next section I analytically defend the final condition for (T): “TE sees Y as morally superior to X/φ.”

3.5 Condition (5): Y is Morally Superior to X

This final section argues for the coherency and necessity of condition (5): “TE believes Y is morally superior to X.” First, I begin with a clarification about the key phrase “morally superior” and then I advance an argument for the necessity of (5). This argument corrects a possible objection, namely, that (5) is entailed in conditions (3), “TE sees X/φ or the desire for X/φ, or both, as bad,” and (4), “TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/φ, some other psychic state, Y, that conflicts with X’s obtaining, with desiring X, or with φ-ing.”⁸⁷ I argue that the reasoning in favor of this objection is unconvincing and that it is crucial to be explicit that (5) is a necessary condition for (T), and that condition (5) actually helps further illuminate the nature of (T).

3.5.1 What Does “Morally Superior” Mean?

In this sub-section I offer a simple clarification regarding what “morally superior” means. Below I argue that (T) necessarily involves believing one of the conflicting inner states Y, is “morally superior” to the tempting desire X. How do I use “morally superior”? In my argument, being “moral superior” does not mean “perfectly moral” or “unsurpassably moral.” Rather, it means only that TE believes Y to be morally *better than* X/φ or the desire for X/φ-ing. Hence, Y need not actually *be* morally good for (T) to occur but only that TE believe Y to be morally better than X/φ, the desire for X/φ-ing.

⁸⁷ Part of the feedback from the reading of a portion of this chapter at the Society of Christian Philosophers Easter Conference (2017) was this point. The response especially from Kyla Ebels-Duggan especially pressed me to think more clearly and strengthen this section.

Now, of course, Y's actually being good would count in an experience of (T), assuming all other conditions are met.

3.5.2 *On the Necessity of Evaluative Ranking Between X and Y in (T)*

In section 3.3 above, I argued that temptation is a *moral* experience, which is partially captured in (3): for TE to believe X is “bad” is to make a *moral* valuation rather than, say, a purely pragmatic valuation. Yet, if all that were necessary for (T) to occur was for a person to believe their desire for X/ ϕ is bad (satisfying condition (3)) and to have some psychic state against either X's obtaining or ϕ -ing (satisfying condition (4)), then it is possible for temptation to range semantically over any or all psychic conflicts that are between equally bad options. Surely such conflicts happen, but they hardly count technically as *temptations*. As I have argued above (see 3.3.1), temptation is a particular kind of experience that needs to be distinguished from other kinds of psychic conflicts. This means that not just any kind of conflict can count for (T) but that it is a peculiar kind of motivational disequilibrium, which involves *moral* evaluation between competing psychic states. Michael Bratman's terminology is to my point: temptation on my developing account necessarily involves “*evaluative rankings*”—and these rankings are distinctively *moral* evaluations.⁸⁸ Even our very casual uses of “temptation” in everyday language captures this evaluative ranking. For example, to say “I'm tempted to have another cookie,” has built in the assumption that “not having another cookie” is the better option—otherwise it is not temptation. I argue that the more morally weighty paradigmatic cases of temptation also need this evaluative ranking.

For substantiation, let us consider again Professor Casey. She is ending a long and hard term—too many students and too many papers. In any case, she is nearing the end of a rather long and technical paper discussing moral psychology and philosophy of action—it has been tedious. An occurrent, volitional, and motivating desire to toss the pages aside and reach for her wine glass and the awaiting Jane Austen novel rises in Casey's psyche (conditions (1) and (2) are satisfied). Casey believes her desire to quit and read is bad (satisfying condition (3)). Earlier in the week, she made a resolution to finish all grading tonight and that conflicts with her desire to quit (condition (4) is satisfied). Yet, suppose, that Casey also believes her resolution is equally bad—perhaps it was hastily or irrationally or coercively made—thus, condition (5) is not satisfied.

⁸⁸ Michael Bratman, “Toxin, Temptation, and Stability of Intention,” in *Rational Commitment and Social Justice*, eds., Jules L. Coleman and Christopher W. Morris (New York: CUP, 1998), 60.

Some kind of internal conflict is occurring but it is not at all intuitive that it is temptation. Casey's scenario is more like a moral dilemma—a choice between two or more bad options—than it is like (T). A person who believes they only have bad motivational options to choose from is not experiencing temptation. Thus, (T) requires that the conflicting state be believed to be morally superior. This is consistent with the argument I forwarded in section 3.3.1 above and together with that section this argument shows that condition (5) is necessary.

In this section I have built on the arguments in sections 3.3 and 3.4 above in order to further contend that condition (5) is both conceptually coherent and necessary for any experience of (T). Together with the previous arguments, this section shows the conceptual consistency and coherency of (T) and in so doing culminates the developing account for (T).

4 Conclusion

The argument of this chapter is readily summarized. I have constructed an analytic ethical conception of the nature of temptation that develops and improves on important implications of the philosophical accounts of temptation evaluated in Chapter 2 in order to arrive at a set of necessary conditions for the state of being tempted, (T). My line of reasoning began with an explication of a common understanding of temptation as both involving desire and being morally dubious. Indeed, the biblical-theological data from the letter of James set the parameters that (T) must incorporate desire and immorality. From this common understanding and biblical-theological data, I argued for an analytically technical conception of (T) such that it is an internal, conative conflict whereby a person desires some state of affairs X or action ϕ , which the person believes is bad, and the person simultaneously has some internal, psychic state that conflicts with X obtaining or ϕ -ing and is a state believed by the temptee to be morally superior to X/ϕ . In the conception I develop and defend, five necessary conditions for (T) exhibit the conceptual power and facility to distinguish accurately (T) from other psychic and motivational conflicts:

- (1) The temptee TE has a desire for some state of affairs, X , or action ϕ .
- (2) TE's desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action in order to do ϕ or obtain X .
- (3) TE believes X/ϕ or the desire for X/ϕ , or both, is bad.
- (4) TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/ϕ , some other psychic state, Y , that conflicts with X 's obtaining, with desiring X , or with ϕ -ing.

(5) TE sees Y as morally superior to X/ ϕ .

As indicated earlier in section 3, these individually necessary conditions may be jointly sufficient for an experience to be considered temptation, but that is not the burden of my argument on the nature of temptation. My argument to this point has shown that (T) is best understood philosophically in this specified technical way. Furthermore, I have argued that these conditions are each individually consistent and coherent as a set. Thus, this chapter shows the philosophical and theological conceptual coherency of (T) and, in so doing, analytically clarifies one of the key components in the thesis of the project: *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary.*

The portion of my argument that is still to be developed in Chapter 5 will show that (T) so understood must be possible in order for virtue development. But before moving to that ultimate component of the argument, we must first augment this construal of (T) in relation to an important area of moral philosophy and virtue ethics: the discussion of *akrasia*, or weakness of will. In Chapter 4, I will argue that (T) and *akrasia* or weakness of will are distinct moral experiences but that there is important overlap between the two, namely, that temptation succumbed-to is sometimes *akrasia* or weakness of will. This next step of the argument more fully elucidates the nature of temptation here as the key component of my overall argument.

Chapter 4: Temptation, *Akrasia*, and Moral Responsibility

1 Introduction: The Structure of the Argument and a Preliminary Conception of *Akrasia*

Now that a technically precise definition of temptation has been defended and explained in Chapter 3, its fuller conceptual contours and texture must be further explicated in relation to other elements of moral experience. The present chapter contributes to the overarching goal of this project—establishing the claim that growth in moral virtue requires an environment in which experiences of temptation (as conceived and defended in the previous chapter) are possible—by distinguishing temptation from other neighboring concepts on the philosophical landscape with which it is often confused.

Most particularly, I will argue in this chapter that temptation and *akrasia*/weakness of will,¹ while similar conceptually and experientially, are significantly

¹ “*Akrasia*” is generally left untranslated and etymologically unexplained in the literature. The word comes from the early Greek philosophers and means “lack of control.” When Latin writers are working with the same concept they use, *incontinentia* (the Greek, *enkrateia* is “being in control” and *continentia* is the Latin equivalent); see Chris Bobonich and Pierre Destrée, “Introduction,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), xv. It is a Greek term that finds use in both Plato/Socrates and Aristotle. Aristotle gives much more attention to the concept and sets the stage for much later discussions. *Akrasia* has been translated as “incontinence,” “want of self-control,” “weakness of will,” and on occasion “backsliding” and is understood to be the counterpart to *enkrateia* or self-control/continence (Alfred Mele, *Backsliding: Understanding Weakness of Will* [New York, OUP, 2012], 13, and *Irrationality: An Essay on Akrasia, Self-Deception, and Self-Control* [New York: OUP, 1987], 4; “Backsliding” seems to originate with R.M. Hare in *Freedom and Reason* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963]).

There is debate in contemporary scholarship regarding which locution is most appropriate *akrasia*, weakness of will, or incontinence. In various writers *akrasia* is used synonymously with “weakness of will” (e.g., Sarah Stroud and Larisa Svirsky, “Weakness of Will,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta [Fall 2019 edition], <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/weakness-will/>). However, not all philosophers agree that *akrasia* and weakness of will are the same phenomenon, and, indeed, I have found Richard Holton’s argument to that end persuasive (and will note it below; *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* [New York: OUP, 2009], 70-96; and “Inverse *Akrasia* and Weakness of Will,” online: https://www.academia.edu/2363790/Inverse_Akrasia_and_Weakness_of_Will).

To be sure, not all philosophers follow Holton’s distinction but it has made enough of an impact that Alfred Mele, one of the major contributing voices in the various debates, has not merely mentioned the distinction between *akrasia*/weakness of will as a consideration but has adjusted his terminological use (Mele does not fully side with Holton but takes the distinction as something needing careful consideration; see *Backsliding*, 2; Joshua May and Richard Holton summarize well the debate between Mele and Holton in “What in the World is Weakness of Will,” *PhSt* 157 [2012]: 341-360). Given this possible distinction between *akrasia* and weakness of will, I have opted to not use them interchangeably and to, at the start at least, only use ‘*akrasia*.’ A further reason for this, but one that will only have a subsidiary role in this chapter, is that I think *akrasia* can work as a kind of umbrella concept under which the other terms can find a place; to put it differently: *akrasia* is the set in which we find ‘weakness of will,’ ‘incontinence,’ ‘want of self-control,’ etc. (i.e., *akrasia* = {weakness of will, incontinence, want of self-control, etc.}).

different. In pressing toward this fuller and clearer conceptual placement of temptation, I build momentum toward the following chapter in which I argue that the very precise conception of temptation here is actually essential to moral character formation.

To complete the conceptual placement of temptation in this chapter, I also analyze its connection to moral culpability. This further supports the overall project, first, by treating the concept of temptation here as importantly related to key concepts in moral philosophy and theology, which are best accounted for in a neo-Aristotelian framework of virtue ethics. Unfortunately, not all ethical frameworks—utilitarianism and moral subjectivism, for example—have robust theories of virtue and its development. Thus, the analysis of temptation is not in a vacuum but fits best and most naturally within the philosophical context that also takes seriously and makes sense of *akrasia* and moral culpability.

I argued in Chapter 2 that temptation has received scant philosophical reflection and investigation. However, if temptation is exactly identical to *akrasia*, then my contention would be false, since *akrasia* has indeed received considerable philosophical and some theological attention.² Although the explicit claim that “temptation” and “*akrasia*” are identical is virtually nonexistent, the two terms are frequently employed interchangeably, as if they are synonyms.³ In light of the lack of scholarly focus on the relationship between the two, this chapter accomplishes two basic functions in my argument. First, it investigates the relationship between temptation and *akrasia*, showing

² Perhaps the best and most up-to-date review of the literature on *akrasia* is Sarah Stroud and Larisa Svirsky, “Weakness of Will.” Cf., Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destreé (eds.), *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2007); Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (eds.), *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality* (New York: OUP, 2007); Tobias Hoffman (ed.), *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, SPHP, vol., 49 (Washington, D.C.: CUAP, 2008); Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994); and Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 2011)

From the perspective of theology, which engages discussion of *akrasia* most in response to Paul’s words in Romans 7, see the following: A. Van Den Beld, “Romans 7.14-25 and the Problem of *Akrasia*,” *RelStud.* 21, no. 4 (Dec., 1985): 495-515; Stefan Krauter, “Wenn das Gesetz nicht gesagt hätte, . . . : Röm. 7.7b und antike Äußerungen zu paradoxen Wirkungen von Gesetzen,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 108 (2011): 1-15.

³ For example in Straud and Svirsky, “Weakness of Will,” §3.4.2; Kenneth Dorter, “Weakness of Will in Plato’s Republic,” in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, 21. Paul M. Hughes, “The Logic of Temptation,” *Philosophia* 29 (2002): 90. James Wetzel says that Augustine takes temptation and *akrasia* to be similar, although he does not cite where Augustine makes this connection (“Body Double: Saint Augustine and the Sexualized Will,” in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, 61). Michael Bratman uses “temptation” to name what others describe as *akrasia*/weakness of will, see *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency* (New York: CUP, 1999), 35-57; “Temptation and the Agent’s Standpoint,” *Inquiry* 57, no. 3 (2014): 293-310; and *Structures of Agency: Essays* (New York: OUP, 2007), 257-82. Talbot Brewer equates temptation-resisted with *enkrateia* and temptation to *akrasia*; Talbot Brewer, “The Character of Temptation,” *PacPh* 83, no. 2 (2002): 103-30.

that, while there can be overlap between the two, they are different. More precisely, some akratic experiences may be experiences of temptation succumbed-to but not all experiences of temptation are experiences of *akrasia*. Second, this chapter evaluates and explicates how temptation is, if ever, morally culpable. This point further substantiates my previous point in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1) that temptation is, in general, a morally dubious experience. In fact, I show that, in some cases, experiencing temptation, even when one does not succumb, is—perhaps contrary to common intuition—morally blameworthy.

2 The Conception of *Akrasia* and Weakness of Will in Analytic Philosophy and Theology

Although writers do not all agree, and sometimes add specific clarifications, the basic definition of *akrasia*/weakness of will/incontinence has been: “free, intentional action contrary to the agent’s better judgment.”⁴ The contemporary discussion of this particular concept of *akrasia*—chiefly wrestling with whether such a phenomenon is possible—has exploded since the publication of Donald Davidson’s essay “How is Weakness of Will Possible?” in 1970.⁵ The ensuing discussion and debate has subjected *akrasia* to serious question—particularly whether it is possible or not—which has resulted in a variety of conceptions of *akrasia*, one of which is actually a distinction between *akrasia* and weakness of will.⁶

⁴ Mele, *Irrationality*, 4; Cf. Donald Davidson, “How is Weakness of Will Possible?” reprinted in *Essays on Actions and Events*, 2nd ed. (New York: OUP, 2001), 20; Mele, *Backsliding*, 8; Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*, 94; Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet, “Introduction,” in *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality*, eds. Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (New York: OUP, 2003), 2; Stroud, Sarah and Svirsky, Larisa, “Weakness of Will;” Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue: An Inquiry into Moral Agency* (New York: OUP, 2003), 35; Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (New York: OUP, 1994), 210; and Robert Sokolowski, *Moral Action: A Phenomenological Study* (Washington, DC: CUAP, 2017), 124; Tobias Hoffman, “Introduction,” in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, ix.

A recent and related development in analytic philosophy, though not the focus here (which further suggests the need to differentiate) is “epistemic akrasia.” According to David Owens, the epistemically akratic person is one who believes something that she thinks she ought not believe; like the akratic person, so the analogy goes, does something that he thinks he ought not do (Owens is not the first to wrestle with this question, but he is the first to label it epistemic akrasia, see “Epistemic Akrasia,” *The Monist* 85, no. 3 [2002]: 381-97). Cf., Allen Coates, “Rational Epistemic Akrasia,” *APhQ* 49, no. 2 (April 2012): 113-24; Heather Battaly, “Epistemic Indulgence,” *Metaphilosophy* 41, no. 1/2 (2010): 214-34; Sophie Horowitz, “Epistemic Akrasia,” *Noûs* 41, no. 4 (2014): 718-44.

⁵ Op. cit., *Essays on Actions and Events*, 21-42.

⁶ Richard Holton, “Intention and Weakness of Will,” *JPh.*, 96 (1999): 241-262; Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Mir-Mohammadi, “Is the Contemporary Account of Weakness of Will Complete?” *RI* 2, no. 3 (Winter and Spring 2013): 91-101.

The distinctions that have emerged from this conversation will help both to locate and clarify the concept of temptation I defended in the previous chapter. In a brief examination of the various ideas of *akrasia* and related concepts, it becomes clear whether temptation under the present conception counts as either *akrasia* or weakness of will, both, or as something else. At a minimum, this examination will situate this project within an ongoing discussion in moral philosophy, moral psychology, and philosophy of action. Yet, the examination to follow can provide further benefit than mapping theoretical relations in moral philosophy. This section, then, follows the leads that come from the analysis of *akrasia* to determine if or when temptation is actually *akrasia*, weakness of will, or something else. For this purpose, I provide a critical overview of the scholarly debate that, while not pursuing the myriad nuances, specifically tracks with the most informative voices for Western analytic philosophy (and theology).

2.1 A Historical-Contemporary Survey of the Concept of Akrasia and Weakness of Will
Philosophical discussion of *akrasia* did not originate with Donald Davidson's famous article in 1970; it has been part of Western philosophy from the beginning.⁷

Unsurprisingly for Western philosophy, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle largely set the parameters of the discussion, including discussions within the analytic tradition. Also unsurprising is that any work in analytic moral theology must consider the towering figures of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, both of whom also shape analytic philosophy as we know it. In fact, the contemporary discussion almost entirely focuses on the initial dilemma set up by both Socrates/Plato and Aristotle: is it possible to act against what one knows is good (or put differently, is all moral weakness based in ignorance)? Although resolving this question is not the present aim, it is prelude to clarification of the concept of the *akrasia* to be compared and contrasted with the concept of temptation here defended. Nonetheless, relevant references to the positions of these key thinkers are inevitable as we analyze the very large topic of *akrasia*.

2.1.1 Plato and the Platonic Socrates on Akrasia

Through Plato, we have Socrates declaring that *akrasia* is not possible: "no one who knows or believes there is something else better than what he is doing, something

⁷ Indeed, Davidson is responding to R. M. Hare's denial of *akrasia* in two texts, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952) and *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

possible, will go on doing what he had been doing when he could be doing what is better” (*Protagoras* 358b).⁸ What is it exactly that is supposedly not possible? It is acting against one’s judgment—knowledge or belief—that some course of action is better in favor of another, lesser course of action. This is Socrates’s/Plato’s conception of *akrasia*, which he thinks is impossible.

2.1.2 Aristotle on *Akrasia*

The question of whether Aristotle agrees with Socrates on the possibility of *akrasia* is much debated.⁹ Aristotle’s remarks that seem to agree with Socrates are located in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VII) where he discusses incontinent and continent persons, persons who are neither fully virtuous nor fully vicious but fall somewhere between the two poles.¹⁰ As Aristotle explains, “the incontinent man, knowing what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion, while the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad,

⁸ Plato, *Protagoras*, trans., Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed., John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., Inc., 1997), 787. Other passages in Plato raise and then deny the idea of *akrasia*, but this passage is most frequently cited; see, Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, “Socrates on *Akrasia*, Knowledge, and the Power of Appearance,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy*, 1-17; Chris Bobonich, “Plato on *Akrasia* and Knowing Your Own Mind,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy*, 41-60. Roslyn Weiss argues against the “standard view” that Socrates is denying *akrasia*. Instead, Socrates is arguing against a particular *hedonistic* ethic/philosophy (see *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* [Chicago: The UCP, 2006]; and “Thirst as Desire for Good,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy*, 87-101). Cf. the essays in Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (eds.), *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: from Socrates to Plotinus*; especially the following, Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, “Socrates on *Akrasia*, Knowledge, and the Power of Appearance,” 1-18; Chris Bobonich, “Plato on *Akrasia* and Knowing Your Own Mind,” 41-60; Christopher Shields, “Unified Agency and *Akrasia* in Plato’s *Republic*,” 61-86; and Gabriela Roxana Carone, “*Akrasia* and the Structure of the Passions in Plato’s *Timaeus*,” 101-18.

⁹ Norman O. Dahl, *Practical Reason, Aristotle, and Weakness of Will* (Minneapolis, MN: UMP, 1984), 139-41. Dahl defends the view, which he calls “An Alternate Explanation” (188-218), that Aristotle disagrees with Socrates and that weakness of will is possible. This contrasts with the “Traditional View,” namely, that Aristotle agrees with Socrates. Terence Irwin traces Aristotle’s comments through three of his writings, the *Magna Moralia* (commonly thought to be pseudepigraphal but Irwin suggests authenticity), and the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *NE*, to suggest that Aristotle’s view develops chronologically from more critical of and antagonistic to Socrates (*MM*), to more favorable (*EE*), finally to more indifferent but sympathetic (*NE*); “Aristotle Reads the *Protagoras*,” in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, 22-41.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, the Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1984), 1808-25. Cf.: A. W. Price, “*Acrasia* and Self-Control,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s NE*, ed. Richard Kraut (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 224-54.

does not follow them because of his reason” (*NE*, 1145b.11-13).¹¹ With Aristotle, as with Socrates, *akrasia* pertains to acting against one’s knowledge or judgment.¹²

It is Socrates’s/Plato’s and Aristotle’s conception that sets the stage for all further discussion in Western philosophy.¹³ Since the details of that discussion, which is centered on the possibility or impossibility of *akrasia*, are not essential to the present argument, I will not pursue the debate further. It does appear that either position—on the possibility or impossibility of *akrasia*—is compatible and unproblematic for the position that I articulate and defend: that *akrasia* and temptation are generally two different, yet related, experiences.

2.1.3 Augustine of Hippo on Knowingly Doing Bad

Because the current project is not simply a work in analytic moral philosophy but also a contribution to analytic moral *theology*, the major voice of Augustine from church tradition must help inform our discussion.¹⁴ With Augustine we get a change from Socrates/Plato and Aristotle, who argued that wrong acts, acts that evidence a lack of

¹¹ Aristotle, *NE*, 1809. Although the details are not essential to the argument here, Aristotle technically offers two kinds of incontinence: “impetuosity” and “weakness” (*NE*, 1818; 1050b.19). Theodore Scaltsas argues that there are two kinds of “weakness”: strong and weak *akrasia* in Aristotle’s conception (“Weakness of Will in Aristotle’s Ethics,” *SJP* 24, no. 3 (1986): 375-382. The point here is that I am glossing over a very technical discussion and debate in Aristotelian scholarship but even still this small look captures enough of Aristotle’s account to inform a more generalized philosophical account of *akrasia* that is pertinent to the argument at hand.

¹² To be clear, it is not this simple in the Aristotelian scholarship: “Rather, in any case of what appears to be *akrasia*, there is a real question whether the agent acts against his considered judgment of what is better, or rather acts against a judgment the commitment to which is too tenuous to render the action *akratic*” (Heda Segvic, *From Protagoras to Aristotle: Essays in Ancient Moral Philosophy*, ed. Myles Burnyeat [Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2009], 122). Cf., David Wiggins, who tentatively offers “a more Aristotelian account [of *akrasia*] than Aristotle’s” (“Weakness of Will Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty [Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1980], 250). Perhaps instead of “knowledge,” *akratic* action is action taken in opposition to one’s *understanding*, which is a heightened and more puzzling phenomenon. Hendrik Lorenz argues that Aristotle’s use of the Greek verb *epistasthai* is better translated “understanding” than “knowledge,” given that ‘understanding,’ in English, is closer to the notion of expertise than is ‘knowledge,’ which what is behind the Greek verb (as it’s used by Plato and Aristotle). See Hendrik Lorenz, “Aristotle’s Analysis of Akratic Action,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle’s NE*, ed. Ronald Polansky (New York: CUP, 2014), 244-45. That Aristotle’s account is somehow connected to epistemology is abundantly clear, even if the Aristotle scholarship is divided on exactly what Aristotle was attempting to articulate and precisely how he solved the problem of *akrasia*; see Amélie Oksenberg Rorty discussion of ignorance and *akrasia* in Aristotle, “*Akrasia* and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, 267-84.

¹³ Alfred Mele, “Weakness of Will and *Akrasia*,” *PhSt* 150, no. 3 (2010): 391.

¹⁴ Augustine’s thought finds place in a handful of contemporary works on *akrasia*: James Wetzel, “Body Double: Saint Augustine and the Sexualized Will,” 58-81; Daniel P. Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness* (New York: Rodopi, 2006); Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Medieval Thought*; and J. Caleb Clanton, “Teaching Socrates, Aristotle, and Augustine on *Akrasia*,” *Religions* 6 (2015): 419-433, doi:10.3390/rel6020419.

control (*akrasia*), are only possible on ignorance. For Augustine, however, a person could act wrongly while knowing and judging that one's action is less than the best. Regarding the possibility of *akrasia*, the famous pear tree incident appears to differentiate clearly Augustine from Socrates/Plato and potentially Aristotle: "I was under no compulsion of need... Yet I wanted to steal, and steal I did... I simply wanted to enjoy the theft for its own sake, and the sin."¹⁵

It might seem that Augustine both endorses the possibility of *akrasia* and the idea that it is constituted by acting against one's better judgment. However, complicating this quick appraisal of Augustine is his robust and nuanced view of the will in human action, which is found widely throughout the corpus of his work, none of which explicitly addresses *akrasia* per se.¹⁶ Earlier Greek philosophers, by contrast, took human action as essentially and fundamentally tied to rationality; not so for Augustine.¹⁷ Indeed, as Christian Tornau argues, "Augustine comes closer than any earlier philosopher to positing will as a faculty of choice that is reducible neither to reason nor to non-rational desire."¹⁸ Daniel Thero is correct to argue that Augustine articulates a "significant innovation" regarding *akrasia* with his concept of the will.¹⁹ Moreover, Augustine's view will necessarily orient theologically as well as philosophically because the will is conceived in relation to God, a point which is far from incidental to his conception of *akrasia*.²⁰ Ultimately, for Augustine, *akrasia* is not merely acting against one's better judgment but acting in a way that is both against good reason and the will oriented toward God.²¹ Augustine agrees with Socrates/Plato and Aristotle that *akrasia* involves reason/knowledge/judgment but importantly adds that the will can be misaligned, a

¹⁵ Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 30; II.iv.9.

¹⁶ Clanton, "Teaching Socrates, Aristotle, and Augustine on *Akrasia*," 427. Augustine wrote in Latin not Greek and therefore did not use '*akrasia*.' Whatever account we offer that is "Augustine's view of *akrasia*," will necessarily be interpretive since he neither used the word nor gave the concept any overt analysis (Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 51).

¹⁷ Christian Tornau, "Saint Augustine," *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2020 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/augustine/>.

¹⁸ Tornau, "Saint Augustine," §7.4.

¹⁹ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 51.

²⁰ Thero recognizes the theological cast to Augustine's views but seems to think that Augustine's philosophical views can be exegeted without much overt attention to his theological commitments, so long as we bear in mind the metaphysical grounding (*Understanding Moral Weakness*, 52). I think this is mistaken. While we may not need to explicate every detail, more than mere keeping in mind is necessary since the condition and orientation of the will, for Augustine, is determined wholly by reference to God.

²¹ Clanton, "Teaching Socrates, Aristotle, and Augustine on *Akrasia*," 430; Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 57; Wetzel, "Body Double: Saint Augustine and the Sexualized Will," 63.

matter pertaining to both knowledge and volition.²² This unique addition to the conversation is significant and one generally endorsed by Thomas Aquinas as well.

2.1.4 Thomas Aquinas on *Akrasia*

Since Thomas Aquinas, like Augustine, is important to traditions of both analytic philosophy and analytic moral theology, a short analysis of his idea of *akrasia* will assist the current argument. Aquinas's connection to the contemporary discussion is not forced by mere methodology here. Indeed, Donald Davidson engages, and ultimately critiques, Thomas on *akrasia*.²³ Although Thomas's account of *akrasia* is debated, it has received less attention than either the accounts of both Socrates/Plato and Aristotle, perhaps because he has drawn less attention among contemporary analytic philosophers of action and moral psychology.²⁴ Nonetheless, Aquinas is a towering and resounding voice in moral theology and analytic theology, although neither discipline has focused on his concept of *akrasia* per se.

Acknowledging the influences of Aristotle and Augustine on Aquinas, both in general and on the topic of *akrasia*, Aquinas's account of weakness of will is considerably more complicated because of his more elaborate philosophy of action and expansive moral philosophy. Following Augustine, Thomas gives the will a robust role in human action but expands it into a much broader conception than Augustine. For Aquinas, any "human act" necessarily involves the whole "system" of the human being.²⁵

²² According to Saarinen, Augustine's conception of *akrasia* is more accurately denoted as fundamentally about the will (Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Medieval Thought*, 37). This is importantly substantiated by the phrase Augustine uses to describe what the Greeks called *akrasia*, *invictus facere*—"to do something unwillingly" (Ibid., 20).

²³ Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible," 33-35.

²⁴ See the various essays defending or clarifying Aquinas in light of Davidson: Paul Hoffman, "Aquinas on Threats and Temptations," *PacPh*, 86 (2005): 225-42; Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002); Bonnie Kent, "Aquinas and Weakness of Will," *Ph&PhenR*, 75, no. 1 (2007): 70-91; Denis J.M. Bradley, "Thomas Aquinas on Weakness of the Will," in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, 82-114; Martin Pickavé, "Aquinas on Incontinence and Psychological Weakness," in *Aquinas and the NE*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, John Muller, and Matthias Perkhams (New York: CUP, 2013), 184-202; and Steven J. Jensen, *Sin: A Thomistic Psychology* (Washington, DC: CUAP, 2018).

²⁵ Ralph McInerney explains Thomas's distinction between "acts of a human," which are animalistic, reflexive, or instinctual, from "human acts," which are acts humans make *qua* human—they involve all the capacities of intellect, will, and passion (*Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, revised ed. [Washington, DC: CUAP, 1997], 79). Eleonore Stump uses "system-level" language for Aquinas's conception of the will in order to distinguish it from other ancient and contemporary accounts that make the will a discrete part of some other whole (*Aquinas* [New York: Routledge, 2005], 277).

The will, then, is not a lone actor and neither is the intellect.²⁶ As Eleonore Stump explains,

It is apparent, then, that on Aquinas's account of intellect and will, the will is part of a dynamic feedback system composed primarily of the will and the intellect, but also including the passions. The interaction between will and intellect is so close and the acts of the two powers are so intertwined that Aquinas often finds it difficult to draw the line between them.²⁷

Aquinas's view of the nature of *akrasia* is based on his theological anthropology. Human action, for Thomas, is ordered to some end "that is sought as fulfilling or perfective of the agent."²⁸ And it is here that Thomas's Christian commitments shape his anthropology: no created end is perfective of humans, only God, who is goodness itself, is perfective of human beings.²⁹

Thomas begins his explanation of *akrasia*, which he calls "weakness" and incontinence of the soul,³⁰ with the analogy that it is like weakness of body. The analogy sets the conceptual stage:

Therefore weakness of the soul is when the soul is hindered from fulfilling its proper action on account of a disorder in its parts. Now as the parts of the body are said to be out of order, when they fail to comply with the order of nature, so too the parts of the soul are said to be inordinate, when they are not subject to the order of reason, for the reason is the ruling power of the soul's parts.³¹

Aquinas, thus, essentially accepts the prior account of *akrasia* as acting against one's better judgment, but analyzes weakness as more than merely acting against better judgment.³² Like Augustine, Aquinas sees *akrasia* consisting in human action that involves the whole of the human being, including the intellect, the will, and the

²⁶ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 68; Colleen McClusky, "Medieval Theories of Free Will," *IEP*, eds. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/freewi-m/>; accessed 17 June 2020.

²⁷ Stump, *Aquinas*, 282.

²⁸ McInerney, *Ethica Thomistica*, 29.

²⁹ McInerney, *Ethica Thomistica*, 30.

³⁰ Steven J. Jensen, following one of Thomas's locutions, calls *akrasia* "sin of passion" (*Sin: A Thomistic Psychology*, 125).

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 77, Art. 3.

³² Pickavé, "Aquinas on Incontinence and Psychological Weakness," 193-96; Bradley, "Thomas Aquinas on Weakness of the Will," 85.

passions.³³ The intellect, which is ordered to the good and can be influenced by the passions, presents to the will that which it apprehends as good and the will motivates action.³⁴ *Akrasia*, then, is action contrary not merely to one's better judgment but also against one's freedom, since whatever does not orient the will toward its appropriate end is binding not freeing.³⁵

2.1.5 Alfred Mele and the Contemporary Philosophical Conception of *Akrasia*

Although other thinkers after Aquinas wrote about *akrasia*, their treatments never made much impact.³⁶ We can mark 1970 as the point when contemporary interest in the topic exploded, with the publication of Donald Davidson's essay "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" Since the expansion of quality literature on *akrasia* occurred when analytic approaches in philosophy were thriving, I interact herein with the literature of the last 50 years. After Davidson launched the contemporary analytic discussion of *akrasia*, Alfred Mele³⁷ kept it going, such that his conception is considered standard,³⁸ with the exception noted in section 2.1.6 below.

³³ Stump, *Aquinas*, 283.

³⁴ Stump, *Aquinas*, 341.

³⁵ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 77; Stump, *Aquinas*, 439;

³⁶ Some of the previously cited works include chapters on the interim period between Aquinas and contemporary scholars. See Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Medieval Thought*; Hoffmann (ed), *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*; and Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

³⁷ This is a select bibliography of Mele's work on *akrasia*: "Aristotle on *Akrasia* and Knowledge," *The Modern Schoolman* 58 (1981): 137-157; "*Akrasia*, Reasons, and Causes," *PhSt* 44 (1983): 345-68; "Pears on *Akrasia*, and Defeated Intentions," *Philosophia* 14 (1984): 145-52; "Aristotle on *Akrasia*, *Eudaimonia*, and the Psychology of Action," *HPhQ* 2 (1985): 375-93; "Is Akrotic Action Unfree?" *Ph&PhenR* 46 (1986): 673-79; *Irrationality: An Essay on Akrotasia, Self-Deception, and Self-Control* (New York: OUP, 1987); "Akrotic Action and the Practical Role of Better Judgment," *PacPh*. 72 (1991): 33-47; "*Akrasia*, Self-Control, and Second-Order Desires," *Noûs* 26 (1992): 281-302; "Socratic Akrotic Action," *PhPa* 25 (1996): 149-59; "Autonomy and *Akrasia*," *PE*, 3 (2002): 207-216; "Akrotics and Addicts," *APhQ* 39 (2002): 153-67; "A Libertarian View of Akrotic Action," *SPHP* 49 (2008): 252-75; "Weakness of Will and *Akrasia*" *PhSt* 150 (2010): 391-404; *Backsliding: Understanding Weakness of Will* (New York: OUP, 2012).

³⁸ Some of the major conversation partners include Robert Audi, "Weakness of Will and Practical Judgment," *Noûs* 13 (1979): 173-96 and "Weakness of Will and Rational Action," *AJPh* 68 (1990): 270-81; Michael Bratman, "Practical Reasoning and Weakness of the Will," *Noûs* 13 (1979): 153-71; Justin Gosling, *Weakness of the Will* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Frank Jackson, "Weakness of Will," *Mind* 93 (1984): 1-18; Alison McIntyre, "Is Akrotic Action Always Irrational?" in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. O. Flanagan and A. Rorty (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 379-400 and "What is Wrong with Weakness of Will?" *JPh* 103 (2006): 284-311; Sergio Tenenbaum, "The Judgment of a Weak Will," *Ph&PhenR*, 59 (1999): 875-911; Gary Watson, "Skepticism About Weakness of Will," *PhR* 86 (1977): 316-39.

Mele's notion of "strict *akrasia*" has become widely accepted even while the debate over its possibility or rationality has grown.³⁹ Since the possibility/irrationality of *akratic* action is not the focus here, I do not delve into those debates. But Mele's definition of "strict *akrasia*" will be critical to our current analysis and argument:

An action [ϕ] is a *strict incontinent action* if and only if it is performed intentionally and freely and, at the same 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 [ϕ] at that time.⁴⁰

While largely consonant with ancient definitions, Mele's definition is more analytically precise and somewhat expanded (to include notions of freedom and intentionality).

2.1.6 Richard Holton the Revisionist: *Akrasia is not Weakness of Will*

Although Mele's "strict *akrasia*" has become the standard conception, a small group of thinkers have argued for what they claim is a better conception.⁴¹ Chief among these revisionists is Richard Holton,⁴² who argues that there is a difference between *akrasia* and weakness of will.⁴³ Holton's contention is that "weakness of will" is an everyday term that non-philosophers use, which does not mean the same as the technical jargon "*akrasia*"—thus creating problems in philosophical discussions which treat them as synonymous.⁴⁴ On the one hand, then, Holton accepts the foregoing descriptions of *akrasia* while, on the other hand, argues that "weakness of will" requires further explication to give precision to the common conception.⁴⁵

³⁹ Stroud and Tappolet, "Introduction," 5.

⁴⁰ Mele, *Irrationality*, 7. This definition has been nuanced by Mele in more recent work (which has not, as yet, received the same attention); he now calls it "core akratic action": "free, sane, intentional action that, as the nondepressed agent consciously recognizes at the time of action, is contrary to his better judgment, a judgment based on practical reasoning" (Mele, *Backsliding*, 8).

⁴¹ Richard Holton, "Intention and Weakness of Will," *JPh* 96 (1999): 241-62 and "How is Strength of Will Possible?" in *Weakness of Will and Practical Rationality*, eds. Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet (New York: OUP, 2007), 39-67. Alison McIntyre, "What is Wrong with Weakness of Will?" *JPh* 103 (2006): 284-311.

⁴² The debate between Mele and Holton is captured in the following: Mele, *Backsliding* and Joshua May and Richard Holton, "What in the World is Weakness of Will?" *PhSt* 157, no. 3 (2012): 341-360.

⁴³ Richard Holton, *Willing, Wanting, Waiting* (New York: OUP, 2009), 70-1. Alison McIntyre agrees, "What is Wrong with Weakness of Will?" *JPh*, 103 (2006): 284-311.

⁴⁴ Holton, *Willing*, 72.

⁴⁵ Holton, *Willing*, 71. See Mele, *Backsliding*, 13-32 for a dissenting view.

According to Holton's argument, the ordinary notion is that weakness of will is "when agents are too ready to reconsider their intentions."⁴⁶ This first glance, he contends, is too imprecise even if largely correct. He offers the following amended, more philosophically rigorous view:

weakness of will is unreasonable revision of a contrary inclination defeating intention (a resolution) in response to the pressure of those very inclinations.⁴⁷

The key to Holton's view is that resolutions are adopted in order to strengthen one against disinclinations that might arise when the time comes to act.⁴⁸ Holton therefore describes resolutions as "contrary inclination defeating intentions."⁴⁹ Resolutions are intentions designed to "defeat" inclinations, like emotions, desires, wants, and the like that would otherwise prohibit one from carrying out some intended course of action. On Holton's account, then, weakness of will is not about acting contrary to one's judgment but acting contrary to one's resolutions or intentions.

We now have two concepts in hand: (a) strict *akrasia*—the free, intentional action against an agent's judgment; and (b) weakness of will—the unreasonable revision of a resolution, which resolution was intended to bolster against competing inclinations. I now turn to critically evaluating the relation between temptation/(T) and (a) and (b).

2.2 *Akrasia* and (T): Related but Different

With the foregoing as prelude, I here engage the following important question: what is the relationship between *akrasia* and temptation? Are they the same, similar, or entirely different? Answering this question will further clarify and differentiate the nature of temptation that I defended in Chapter 3. My approach will be to show that (T) either is (i) identical to *akrasia*; or (ii) is related to *akrasia* but distinct in important ways; or (iii) entirely unrelated to *akrasia*, thus suggesting that treating them as analogous or synonymous is mistaken. Engaging my previous account of temptation with the scholarship on *akrasia*, I develop an argument that substantiates (ii): temptation and *akrasia* are related but not identical experiences.

⁴⁶ Holton, *Willing*, 71.

⁴⁷ Holton, *Willing*, 78.

⁴⁸ Holton *Willing*, 76-7.

⁴⁹ Holton, *Willing*, 77.

In establishing (ii), two benefits accrue to the overall argument. First, it further clarifies the key concept of temptation, which is crucial to my ultimate conclusion: that the possibility of temptation is necessary to the development of moral virtue. Together with Chapter 3, this chapter then serves to provide a fuller explication of what it is exactly that is putatively necessary for developing moral virtue. Second, showing that temptation and *akrasia* are related but different in particular ways justifies the analytic account of temptation I defend—which is not simply a repeat of accounts of *akrasia*. Now let us proceed to our task.

Recall that the core idea of *akrasia* in both the ancient and contemporary writings is that it is acting against one's practical judgment, against what it is good to *do*. As noted above, the differences between how Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas unpack this and how Socrates/Plato, Aristotle, and contemporary scholars unpack this may make an important difference to the analysis at hand. Before I address the complexity raised by Augustinian/Thomistic considerations and by Richard Holton's revisionist account (which countenance favorable overlap between temptation and *akrasia*), I first address their differences.

I here repeat the conception of (T) I defended in Chapter 3 to help guide the investigation of the current question:

(T)_{def.} Temptation is an internal psychic conflict whereby a temptee TE desires some state of affairs, which state of affairs or the desire for the state of affairs the TE judges to be bad, and simultaneously the TE has some other psychic state that conflicts with the obtaining of or desire for the bad state of affairs and which state is seen as morally superior.

2.2.1 *Akrasia as a Character Trait Contrasted to (T)*

One obvious initial distinction between temptation and *akrasia* occurs when *akrasia* is taken to describe a character trait. For example, Aristotle sometimes deploys "*akrasia*" in this fashion:⁵⁰ as a "lack of, or deficiency in, a certain kind of power or strength, namely, the power of self-control."⁵¹ Although this deployment is not typical in the current philosophical scholarship on *akrasia*, it is one possible understanding.⁵² However, taken this way, it cannot be equated with temptation because temptation is not a character trait but an experience—an internal conative conflict. Certainly, it is possible that a person

⁵⁰ For example, in *NE* 1152a25-27.

⁵¹ Alfred Mele, *Irrationality*, 3-4.

⁵² Stroud and Sarah, "Weakness of Will," n1.

experiences temptation due to some character trait, or lack thereof (indeed, perhaps *akrasia* is the character trait that makes for experiences of temptation), but it is extremely difficult to argue that temptation itself is a character trait. On this basis, we must conclude that *akrasia* and temptation are different. Yet, while interesting, this point is insufficient for completely comparing the two concepts, especially since so few thinkers expound *akrasia* as a character trait.⁵³ For fuller comparison, we must tackle the driving question of this section—regarding how *akrasia* and temptation are related—by engaging the commonly received analysis of *akrasia* in the philosophical tradition.

2.2.2 Strict Akrasia and its Likeness to (T)

Daniel Thero offers a very helpful schematic presentation of Mele's strict *akrasia* that makes possible comparison and contrast with (T) and the regnant account of *akrasia* simpliciter. The criteria for an experience to be strict *akrasia* are as follows:

- (i) P acts against their fully considered judgment (typically, best judgment).
- (ii) P's action must be intentional.
- (iii) P's judgment must be grounded in P's own values, principles, beliefs, and objectives.
- (iv) P regrets the action afterward.
- (v) P recognizes, at the time of action, that the action is contrary to their judgment regarding that action.⁵⁴

We can compare these criteria to the six criteria for temptation defended in Chapter 3:

- (1) The temptee TE has a desire for some state of affairs, X, or action ϕ .
- (2) TE's desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action in order to do ϕ or obtain X.
- (3) TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad.
- (4) TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/ ϕ , some other psychic state, Y, that conflicts with X's obtaining, with desiring X, or with ϕ -ing.
- (5) TE sees Y as morally superior to X/ ϕ .
- (6) TE [succumbs to temptation] pursues actualization, in some capacity, of the desire for X or ϕ and gives up, rejects, or ignores the psychic conflict, Y.

⁵³ Thomas J. Hill, "Weakness of Will and Character," *PT* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 93-115; Paulien Juliana Snellen, "Akrasia as a Character Trait" (PhD diss., University of Gronigen, 2018), accessed 16 July 2020, https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/files/54917606/Complete_thesis.pdf.

⁵⁴ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 9; I have amended Thero's version for stylistic conventions only.

Three observations speak to the key difference between these two concepts. First, *akrasia* is always about a current or past action, whereas for (T), the experience is prior to any action. The literature on *akrasia* discusses it as a state of action that a person is either doing or has done. Until the person has succumbed to temptation, no action has yet been performed—which is a major difference between the two ideas. Indeed, this difference is perhaps enough to state that *akrasia* and temptation are categorically different. The second observation adding strength to the claim that the two concepts are different is that (T) is fundamentally about desire first and other psychic states second—(T) begins with a conative attitude. However, for *akrasia*, the operative psychic state is cognitive: judgment or practical reason. The third and final observation here is that temptation is couched in moral terms in a way that *akrasia* is not; this is clear in the literature describing *akrasia*. In Chapter 3 (sections 3.3 and 3.5) I argued that (T) necessarily involves a moral judgment (conditions (3) and (5)), but *akrasia* can properly range semantically over all manner of judgments from moral to non-moral. For example, “Joseph [went to college] rather than [apprenticed with an electrician], even though he judged that to [apprentice with an electrician] was the better thing to do all things considered.”⁵⁵ All things equal, Joseph’s action is *akratic* but not morally dubious. This example highlights the third distinction between *akrasia* and temptation. For these three reasons, *akrasia* and temptation are different. In spite of these points of contrast, however, an important relationship can be carefully discerned.

Joseph’s example raises the prospect that the criteria for succumbing to temptation could be described and interpreted as the criteria for strict *akrasia* (i)-(v). Thus, it would be reasonable to argue that *akrasia* is one particular form of succumbing to temptation but not coextensive with (T) broadly. I argue for the overlap between condition (6) of (T) and the conditions (i)-(v) of strict *akrasia* by way of an example with Joseph.

Joseph is writing his final term paper for the semester. It is hard work. He was assigned “the nature of temptation” as his topic, and he has little motivation for the course. He heard from a friend about a website where he could pay someone to write his paper for him. Joseph desires to pay for a ghostwriter, X, and thus meets condition (1) of (T). This option is motivating—he has the available money, there is a guarantee from the

⁵⁵ Stroud and Svirsky, “Weakness of Will;” I changed the variables to the phrases in brackets.

site that it will pass plagiarism checkers, and there is no way his professor will know—condition (2) is met. Yet, he knows the professor has a requirement that all work submitted must be the student’s own work and he believes paying someone else to write his paper is plagiarism. Thus, Joseph believes his desire for X is wrong—meeting condition (3). In fact, Joseph judges, Y, that it would be best if he simply got down to it and completed the paper; this is, after all, the right and good choice—conditions (4) and (5) are met. Joseph succumbs to temptation: his desire for X wins out against his better judgment Y and he fills out the form on the website and submits payment—meeting condition (6) and (i)-(iii) for strict *akrasia*. Two days later he opens the email from the ghostwriter with his completed term paper; Joseph regrets hiring someone else to complete his work, even though he knew at the time it was a bad idea, and, thus, meets condition (iv) and (v). Prior to filling out the form and making payment, Joseph was in a state of being tempted and once he acted to obtain X, he succumbed to temptation. Furthermore, in succumbing to temptation, Joseph acted akratically: he met conditions (i)-(v). Joseph’s example is intuitively coherent and consistent with philosophical analysis of temptation and *akrasia*. Therefore, this example shows that some experiences of *akrasia* are experiences of temptation succumbed-to.

This analysis suggests two interesting and clarifying points for philosophy of action and moral psychology. First, while *akrasia* and (T) are different, they are not unrelated. In fact, in some cases *akrasia* is temptation succumbed-to. Second, the sometimes-equivocal use of “temptation” and “*akrasia*,” while not exactly accurate, is, in the best cases, only a mistake of timing, as (T) precedes *akrasia*. Then what about (T) and Holton’s concept of weakness of will? Are experiences of (T) also instances of being weak willed?

2.2.3 Richard Holton’s “Weakness of Will” and its Likeness to (T)

Richard Holton’s account of weakness of will, which is different from *akrasia*, is conceived as an “unreasonable revision of a contrary inclination defeating intention (a resolution) in response to the pressure of those very inclinations.”⁵⁶ While Holton defends the difference between *akrasia* and weakness of will, he also suggests that the two might overlap on occasion.⁵⁷ This might suggest that in so far as temptation and

⁵⁶ Holton, *Willing*, 78.

⁵⁷ Holton, *Willing*, 84; May and Holton, “What in the World is Weakness of Will,” 342.

akrasia occasionally overlap, and *akrasia* and weakness of will occasionally overlap; that, therefore, temptation and weakness of will occasionally overlap. This conclusion is not guaranteed because it does not necessarily follow that if some T are A, and some A are W, that therefore some T are W. Hence, on this basis, we cannot determine that temptation and weakness of will overlap simply by appealing to the overlap of weakness of will and *akrasia*. Further investigation is required.

Explaining and defending Holton's account of weakness of will, Joshua May and Richard Holton write, "For [Holton], agents display weakness of will only if they violate a resolution. To get a case of weakness of will then, [P] would have to resolve to [ϕ or $\sim\phi$], but then *succumb to temptation* and continue [$\sim\phi$ or ϕ]."⁵⁸ On this account, then, weakness of will is temptation succumbed-to, much like some *akratic* actions are those of succumbed temptation. It is reasonable to conclude that this is largely correct, but with one caveat: not all instances of weakness of will are instances of (T) succumbed-to, but some instances are. The case of Joseph again helps argue this point.

It is a new semester and Joseph has made a resolution, Y, to ϕ : write all his own papers. Thus, he now has "a contrary inclination defeating intention," namely, Y: to ϕ (write all his own papers). Joseph knows that the approaching paper deadline will reawaken his feelings of laziness, sense of dread, and proclivity to procrastination that all disincline him to write and incline him simply to pay a ghostwriter. To defeat these contrary inclinations, he makes his resolution, Y. The end-of-semester deadline for the research paper draws near, and familiar contrary inclinations arise in his psyche. As before, Joseph desires a ghostwriter, $\sim\phi$. The fact that he has the funds coupled with his contrary inclinations means he is motivated to $\sim\phi$. Just as he did last semester, he believes that buying a paper online is cheating and now even thinks that the desire itself is bad. Joseph also remembers that he made resolution, Y: to ϕ (write his own papers). Furthermore, he wants to be honest and have integrity in his studies and recognizes that buying a paper online is a moral violation of both his specific resolution and his desire to be honest. As before, Joseph succumbs to temptation and logs onto the ghostwriting site and purchases a research paper. Joseph resolved to ϕ —to write all his own papers—but then succumbed to temptation and $\sim\phi$ -ed. This shows that May and Holton are right that at least some temptations succumbed-to are instances of weakness of will. However, an important exception can be identified in that not all instances of weakness of will are

⁵⁸ May and Holton, "What in the World," 343; emphasis added, brackets added to abstract the idea from the specific just-so example May and Holton are working with.

instances of temptation succumbed-to. The exception pertains to the moral nature of temptation. On Horton's account, if a person unreasonably violates a non-moral resolution, they will have acted in a way that is classifiable as weakness of will but this weakness of will cannot be classifiable as succumbing to (T) precisely due to the lack of morality.

All of this brings us to another situation with Joseph who, having just overcome his acedia, is now in graduate school in philosophy, and is concerned that he buys too many books. Indeed, at the first mention of some interesting text from one of his professors or colleagues, Joseph immediately goes to Amazon.com to purchase it. This is not a compulsion or addiction, but he does believe his strong inclination to buy so many books is problematic for his finances. He therefore resolves to, $Y: \sim\phi$ —to buy no more books for the remainder of the calendar year. Library check-out and interlibrary loan are his means of book acquisition from now until 01 January. A colleague mentions Alfred Mele's newest book on free will and neuroscience, a text that is supposed to resolve all the scientific problems facing libertarian accounts of free will.⁵⁹ The inclination to buy the book comes. Joseph desires to ϕ : buy a book. This is not a passing, inconsequential desire for him because he has been thinking about the problem of free will in light of scientific findings and is sincerely motivated to get good philosophical research on the topic. There is in Joseph's mind nothing immoral about desiring to ϕ , and certainly nothing immoral about owning the book. Yet, he has made a resolution to refrain from buying any new texts, Y . Without much reflection, Joseph believes his resolution is non-moral, that it is merely pragmatic pertaining to his finances. Regardless of his resolution, Joseph clicks "Buy Now." In this version of the story, Joseph does not meet the conditions of (T) and therefore he is not experiencing temptation, but he *is* acting in a way that is weak willed according to Holton's account. That is, Joseph unreasonably revised his resolution to $\sim\phi$ (not buy any books) by ϕ -ing under the pressure of the inclinations that his resolution was made to defeat.

As with the previous overlap between (T) and *akrasia*, this overlap between (T) and weakness of will grounds a fascinating insight. Although not as novel as the previous temptation-*akrasia* connection, it confirms and corrects May and Holton's association of weakness of will with temptation. Following this same method would show that it is possible that some instances of temptation succumbed-to are also both *akrasia* and

⁵⁹ Alfred Mele, *Free: Why Science Hasn't Disproved Free Will* (Oxford: OUP, 2014). Actually, Mele *does not* claim to solve all the problems!

weakness of will. I need not belabor the case for this, since a simple combination of the first two Joseph stories could, *mutatis mutandis*, show the truth of this claim.

In this section I have argued that (T) is unlike *akrasia* or weakness of will in two ways. First, (T) is not a character trait; thus, if *akrasia* or weakness of will is a character trait, the two are non-identical. Second, *akrasia* and weakness of will are primarily cognitive experiences that are not essentially tied to morality. I have also argued for a novel conclusion regarding the relationship between temptation and *akrasia* and weakness of will, namely, that *akrasia* and weakness of will are occasionally temptation succumbed-to. Thus, I have substantiated my claim that (T) is not *akrasia* or weakness of will. Further, establishing this substantive claim distinguishes it as not merely the combination of work already done on *akrasia* and weakness of will but rather shows that the account of (T) defended here is a constructive contribution to the scholarship, including philosophy of action and philosophical moral psychology. Additionally, this section has itself offered a constructive contribution to the literature on *akrasia* and weakness of will by explicating how temptation and *akrasia*/weakness of will are related but different. This section builds momentum for the overall project by further clarifying the concept of temptation, which is a fundamental component of the central thesis that temptation be possible in a world where moral virtues can be developed.

3 Temptation and Moral Responsibility

Much of the debate about the possibility of *akrasia* or weakness of will also involves discerning how or if either phenomenon could be morally culpable.⁶⁰ As I have shown, (T) is not the same as *akrasia* or weakness of will simpliciter, but there is enough of a “family resemblance” (to use a common term in the analytic tradition) that the issue of temptation’s moral culpability becomes pertinent. Moreover, in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1) I argued that all experiences of (T) are morally dubious experiences, but, even if this is true, it does not show that (T) is ever morally blameworthy/culpable. Therefore, in this section, I do two things to advance the larger argument: first, I clarify how a distinction

⁶⁰ For example, Neil Levy, *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: OUP, 2011); Gideon Rosen, “Skepticism about Moral Responsibility” *PP* 18 (2004): 295–313; and Michael J. Zimmerman, *Living with Uncertainty: The Moral Significance of Ignorance* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

between an action's being bad and its being morally culpable is coherent; and second, I argue that some but not all experiences of temptations are possibly blameworthy.⁶¹

In what follows, I first briefly introduce the operative conception of moral responsibility that is based in contemporary philosophical discussion of culpability.⁶² Once we have a clear view of what it means to be morally responsible, I then provide a critical analysis of whether, and how, temptation could be morally blameworthy. This will then set the stage for the argument of the final chapter, which culminates the thesis of this project: *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary.*

In the introduction I suggested that the argument of this project is one that is parallel to John Hick's soul-making theodicy and Michael Brady's suffering and virtue

⁶¹ It is a very common view among my ethics students that no temptation is ever morally culpable. I argue that this is mistaken and that at least some temptations are in principle morally culpable (see section 3.3 below). In defending this claim, I hope to correct a common misconception about temptation and moral responsibility.

The view that temptation per se is not sinful or bad, and therefore not morally culpable, is also very popular outside my classroom. To be fair, the claim almost never follows any kind of careful argument or analysis, so it is possible that under more careful consideration, proponents would nuance and change the view. My purpose is to offer the often-missing nuanced analysis. For this popular-level view see Kevin DeYoung, "Temptation is Not the Same as Sin," TCG Blog, 26 September 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/temptation-is-not-the-same-as-sin/>; "Is Temptation a Sin?" Got Questions Ministries, <https://www.gotquestions.org/temptation-sin.html>; Oswald Chambers, "September 17: Is There Good in Temptation," *My Utmost For His Highest*, <https://utmost.org/is-there-good-in-temptation/>; Daniel E. Bollen, *Sermons for the Everyday Christian* (Xlibris, 2012), 227; Bruce Wilkinson, *Overcoming Temptation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 27; Ben Johnson and Jeremy Postal, *Stand: A Call to Uncompromising Witness & Discipleship* (Langley, BC: Next Generation Ministries, 2012), 160.

⁶² The literature on moral responsibility is vast, even more than that on *akrasia* (cf. the bibliography in the *SEP* between the entries on "Akrasia," "Moral Responsibility," "Blame," "Skepticism About Moral Responsibility, and "The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility"—or simply notice that moral responsibility has four entries compared to one for *akrasia*!). Commenting on this extensive literature, Michael Zimmerman notes that it is a mess of various shoots and offshoots (Michael Zimmerman, "Varieties of Moral Responsibility" in *The Nature of Moral Responsibility*, eds. Randolph Clarke, Michael McKenna, and Angela M. Smith [New York: OUP, 2015], 45). This messy situation is undoubtedly due in part to the topic's connections to discussions of freedom, determinism, and compatibility, which form a well-worn problem area in philosophy. Therefore, this section will not survey all the various viewpoints or minutia since it is not necessary to carry the argument forward. Hence, much of the literature will be left aside. Some of the various sources will be referenced in the footnotes but many will be left out. I list here a handful of key, book length, sources in the conversation.

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza (eds.), *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993); Phillip Robichaud and Jan Willem Wieland (eds.), *Responsibility: The Epistemic Condition* (Oxford: OUP, 2017); David Widerker and Michael McKenna (eds.), *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); Ishtiyaque Haji, *Moral Appraisability* (New York: OUP, 1998); Neil Levy, *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility* (New York: OUP, 2011); Elinor Mason, *Ways to Be Blameworthy: Rightness, Wrongness, and Responsibility* (Oxford: OUP, 2019); Dana Kay Nelkin, *Making Sense of Free Will and Responsibility* (New York: OUP, 2011); T.M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, and Blame*, (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2008); and the *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility* series, volumes 1-6, edited by David Shoemaker (Oxford: OUP, 2013-2019).

argument.⁶³ One of the key features to Hick's argument is that authentic soul-making requires a world in which real suffering and evil is possible. Brady echoes this by arguing that virtue formation requires a world in which a particular kind of suffering is possible. My argument will be more parallel the more that it is capable of mirroring their ideas. To that end, substantiating that temptation is bad and sometimes morally culpable shows that temptation fits into the description of the world Hick and Brady posit as necessary for moral growth. It takes a certain kind of world—with certain structural features and not others—for certain valuable or positive states or processes to exist. In other words, some world-feature A is necessary for even the possibility of some valuable outcome B. This section, then, progresses the argumentation pattern while also analytically refining the pertinent concept of (T).

3.1 What is Moral Responsibility?

Moral philosophers make an important distinction between actions or dispositions being bad and their being morally blameworthy.⁶⁴ As Ronald Milo notes, just because an action is morally wrong does not mean that it is *immoral*, that is blameworthy.⁶⁵ Gary Watson makes a similar distinction, which I will follow and use, regarding moral behavior: an action may be *attributable* to a person (it is authentically that person's action) but the person may not be *accountable*, that is, morally responsible, for the action.⁶⁶ Even with these distinctions, a person's being morally responsible or accountable has been parsed in a variety of ways by moral philosophers. In this section I briefly and critically sort

⁶³ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010 [originally, 1977]) and Michael S. Brady, *Suffering and Virtue* (New York: OUP, 2018).

⁶⁴ I will focus on blame rather than praise. There is widespread debate over the Symmetry Thesis: "praiseworthiness is the positive analogue of blameworthiness, and thus that factors affecting judgments of moral responsibility should have symmetrical effects on judgments of praise- and blameworthiness" (David Faraci and David Shoemaker, "Huck vs. Jojo: Moral Ignorance and the (A)symmetry of Praise and Blame," in *Oxford Studies in Experimental Philosophy*, vol. 1, eds. Joshua Knobe, Tania Lombrozo, and Shaun Nichols [New York, OUP, 2014], 9, accessed 16 July 2020, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198718765.003.0002). My argument does not require choosing a position in this debate.

⁶⁵ Ronald Dmitri Milo, *Immorality*, Studies in Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy, ed. Marshall Cohen (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1984), 3. Not all agree that this distinction is viable; for an argument that it is a mistake to separate bad action from responsible action see Eduardo Rivera-López, "Can There Be Full Excuses for Morally Wrong Actions?" *Ph&PhenR* 73, no. 1 (July 2006): 124-142.

⁶⁶ Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility," *PT* 24, no. 2 (1996): 227-248; reprinted in Watson, *Agency and Answerability* (New York: OUP, 2004), 260-88 (my citations are from the reprinted version).

through the different positions in order to highlight the specific view that functions in my argument.⁶⁷

First, culpability might pertain to justifying responses to blameworthy persons that seek to modify the person's future behavior.⁶⁸ On this view of responsibility, persons are "blamed" in order to modify their future behavior—it looks forward rather than backward. Some call this view the "consequentialist-based" approach to moral responsibility as it is focused on agents as "the proper targets of reprobation or punishment for immoral actions on the grounds that such treatment will, say, prevent the agent (or other agents) from performing that type of action in the future."⁶⁹ This view has largely fallen out of favor among philosophers, who instead focus on one of the following two approaches.⁷⁰

Second, blame could be about reactive attitudes.⁷¹ Blame is fundamentally about the responsive, affective attitudes one person has to another and the implied expectation of respect and due regard or "the quality of others' wills towards us."⁷² These reactive attitudes include resentment, indignation, anger, and the like.⁷³ This view attempts to explain and justify what it is to be *held* as morally responsible, and not what moral responsibility would mean for future behavior or what it would mean to *be* morally responsible.⁷⁴

A third and final approach maintains that blame is about reasons-responsiveness and *being* morally blameworthy.⁷⁵ This widely held view will be operative in this project.

⁶⁷ Matthew Talbert offers a clear overview of these positions with their main proponents and key arguments in, "Moral Responsibility," in *SEP*, Winter 2019 edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/moral-responsibility/>, §2.

⁶⁸ The central defender of this view is J. J. C. Smart, "Free-Will, Praise and Blame," *Mind* 70 (1961): 291–306.

⁶⁹ Gregg Caruso, "Skepticism About Moral Responsibility," *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2018 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/skepticism-moral-responsibility/>, §1. Gary Watson calls this view the "social regulation" view; see Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme," in *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, 119–48.

⁷⁰ Matthew Talbot, *Moral Responsibility* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 31.

⁷¹ P.F. Strawson's paper offers the classical defense of this view and served as a catalyst for much subsequent philosophical analysis of moral responsibility, see "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1963): 1–25; reprinted in Fischer and Ravizza, *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, 45–66

⁷² Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," 56.

⁷³ Fischer and Ravizza, "Introduction," in *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, 4.

⁷⁴ Talbert, *Moral Responsibility*, 46.

⁷⁵ There is a fourth view that has received only sparse attention, the "ledger view" of responsibility. Moral responsibility consists in keeping an accounting ledger of moral deeds. Two key

In general, “These [reasons-responsive] approaches ground responsibility by reference to agents’ capacities for being appropriately sensitive to the rational considerations that bear on their actions.”⁷⁶ Such a view more closely aligns with the common-sense, everyday conception of moral blame in which persons are held accountable for their actions—often labeled “desert-based blame.”⁷⁷ Gregg Caruso explains:

responsibility is considered to be backward-looking and retributivist in the sense that any punitive attitudes or treatments that are deemed appropriate responses for an immoral act/decision are warranted simply by virtue of the action/decision itself, irrespective of whatever good or bad results might follow from the punitive responses.⁷⁸

The extensive defense of this view in the philosophical literature, which I will not rehearse here, coupled with its resonance with intuitive ideas of responsibility, makes the reasons-responsive/desert-based view most reasonable to apply to the concept of temptation in my developing argument. More particularly, I utilize John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza’s version of responsibility because their account does not depend on settling the complex debate about the exact nature of free will—and whether determinism, compatibilism, or incompatibilism is true.⁷⁹ Calling their view semi-compatibilist, they maintain that free will is incompatible with determinism but that moral responsibility is not incompatible with determinism.⁸⁰ Hence, their account would hold regardless of whether incompatibilist or deterministic interpretations of free will are true.⁸¹

works represent this view: Jonathan Glover, *Responsibility* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) and Michael Zimmerman, *An Essay on Moral Responsibility* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1988).

⁷⁶ Talbert, “Moral Responsibility,” §2.3. The key defenders of this family of views are John M. Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*; Dana Kay Nelkin, *Making Sense of Free Will and Responsibility*; R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1996); and Susan Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason* (New York: OUP, 1990).

⁷⁷ Derek Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (New York, OUP, 2014), 134. I focus only on individual culpability not collective culpability. Cf., Marion Smiley, “Collective Responsibility,” in *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2017 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/collective-responsibility/>.

⁷⁸ Caruso, “Skepticism About Moral Responsibility,” §1.

⁷⁹ For an overview of the arguments and opponents to an account like Fischer’s and Rivazza’s see, Caruso, “Skepticism About Moral Responsibility,” §2.

⁸⁰ Robert Kane, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Kane (New York: OUP, 2011), 18.

⁸¹ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 11.

3.2 The Necessary Conditions for Moral Responsibility

The conditions under which it is appropriate to hold someone morally responsible can be traced back to Aristotle, who noted that either ignorance or force could undermine a person's praiseworthiness or blameworthiness.⁸² In contemporary philosophical discussions, it is generally recognized that there are two individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for moral responsibility: [i] "a control condition (also called freedom condition) and [ii] an epistemic condition (also called knowledge, cognitive, or mental condition)."⁸³ The control or freedom condition captures the sense that for actions to be blamed, they need to be uncoerced. And the epistemic condition captures the sense that for actions to be blamed, they need to stem from a person's knowledge or awareness of certain facts about the action and acting with certain cognitive elements in place (for example, beliefs, intentions, desires, etc.).⁸⁴ If (T) is sometimes morally blameworthy, then what specific conditions of moral responsibility are required for a culpable experience of (T)? In the following section, I will clarify what kind of control is needed for blameworthy (T) and then determine the relevant epistemic condition for blameworthy (T).

3.2.1 *The Control Condition for Moral Responsibility*

Deep in our common moral intuitions is the thought that a person must be in control of their action in order to be blamed, not just in the attributability sense but also in the stronger accountability sense. There is good reason for this. Imagine the case of Zoe who is blamed and sanctioned for knocking over and breaking the hip of an elderly woman crossing the street next to her when Zoe was hit by a gale force wind. In this case, Zoe's "action" is not attributable to her, let alone one that is accountable, because it is entirely outside of her control. But here we face the issue of what is meant by "control"—how much and what kind of control is needed in order to be appropriately accountable for

⁸² Fischer and Ravizza, "Introduction," 7; Cf. *NE* 1109b.30-1111b.5

⁸³ Fernando Rudy-Hiller, "The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility," *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2018 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/moral-responsibility-epistemic/>, §1.

⁸⁴ Fischer and Ravizza, "Introduction," 8.

one's actions?⁸⁵ On these matters, I follow the two-pronged conception of John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza in their landmark work, *Responsibility and Control*.⁸⁶

Fischer and Ravizza distinguish between two kinds of control, one of which is needed for moral culpability whereas the other is not: (i) "guidance control," which is needed for moral responsibility and (ii) "regulative control," which is not needed.⁸⁷ The difference between guidance and regulative control answers the question of how much freedom is needed in order to be morally blameworthy.

Regulative control, which is not needed for responsibility, "involves a *dual* power—for example, the power to freely do some act [ϕ], and the power freely to do something else instead."⁸⁸ The denial of regulative control for blame undercuts the intuition that a person needs an alternate course of action open to them in order to be morally responsible. Fischer and Ravizza's account, however, is building on Harry Frankfurt's famous observation that we count persons as free even when they do not always have another action choice open to them.⁸⁹

When we consider what are now called "Frankfurt-Style Cases," the point becomes more obvious. Imagine that Zoe is committed to voting in the next local election for the long-shot independent candidate and tells her friend Joseph about her plans. Joseph, needing extra money for books, has taken a job with the independent candidate's campaign and wants to ensure Zoe does indeed vote for his boss. Unbeknownst to Zoe, Joseph has implanted a device in her brain that allows him to "read" her mental states and intervene to control her actions if necessary. He has done this to ensure that at voting time, Zoe will not vote for someone other than the independent candidate. On voting day, Zoe is at the booth and she feels the same sense of resolve she did the day she told Joseph about her plan to vote. Without hesitation, she selects the independent candidate. Joseph is elated, although he was fully prepared to

⁸⁵ Attribution is more closely tied to causal responsibility, and while that matters and has important bearing on moral accountability (see Gary Watson's discussion of "self-disclosure" views of moral responsibility in "Two Faces of Responsibility," 261-64), it is not the focus of discussion here. With those philosophers who discuss responsibility, it will be assumed that in investigating the nature of control regarding moral responsibility, the person is appropriately causally responsible (see Zimmerman, "Varieties of Moral Responsibility," 45-6).

⁸⁶ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 31-41. For contrasting and critical accounts see R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*; and Susan Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason*.

⁸⁷ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 33.

⁸⁸ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 31.

⁸⁹ See Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" *JPh* 66, no. 3 (1969): 829-839 and "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" *JPh* 68, no.1 (1971): 5-20.

intervene if necessary. It seems as though Zoe acted freely in voting for the candidate of her choice, but it was not actually open to her to vote for someone else, for if she had thought differently then Joseph would have engaged his brain device and forced her to vote for the independent candidate. In this case, Zoe does not have regulative control over her voting: she did not have the power to do other than she did. The power Zoe does have, according to Fischer and Ravizza is called “guidance control,” which is what is needed for moral responsibility. This kind of control has less scope—it is not control “over”—but it is, nonetheless, important. Guidance control “involves an agent’s freely performing [an] action.”⁹⁰

To be appropriately accountable for their actions a person needs to act with guidance control but they need not act with regulative control: the action needs to be under the control of the person, even if there is no other action available to the them. Still, “guidance control” is vague and therefore is open to philosophical worry regarding its applicability to moral responsibility. Fischer and Ravizza recognize this and say that actions that have in their causal history things like hypnosis, brainwashing and indoctrination, certain mind-altering drugs, coercive manipulation, psychiatric or neurological disorders, or certain coercive threats, can all be “responsibility-undermining factors.”⁹¹ A person needs two things to meet the control condition, according to Fischer and Ravizza: (i) the person’s action mechanism needs to be reason-responsive and (ii) the action mechanism needs to be the person’s own.⁹²

The concept of reason-responsiveness here is taken in a “moderate” sense in that the action process must be in some manner and in some possible scenario responsive to reasons to do otherwise.⁹³ Understood this way, the kind of freedom needed for moral culpability is freedom such that persons who have it possess the ability to respond, in some possible scenario, to some reason or set of reasons. This is fundamentally about the possession of a particular rational capacity, not about the reasons themselves or the beliefs/knowledge/understanding of the person. If a person is such that their “mechanism of action” is moderately reason-responsive and their own, then they meet one of the conditions for moral culpability—the control condition.⁹⁴ This helps explain why persons

⁹⁰ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 31.

⁹¹ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 38.

⁹² Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 39.

⁹³ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 43, 62-91.

⁹⁴ Fischer and Ravizza use “mechanism” as a shorthand descriptor for “the process that leads to the action” or the “way the action comes about;” *Responsibility*, 38.

under the influence of brainwashing and indoctrination are not candidates for moral culpability: their mechanism of rationality is not reason-responsive. The example of Zoe shows this. If she were to vacillate at the moment of voting and Joseph, the “counterfactual intervener,”⁹⁵ activated the brain device causing her to vote for the independent candidate, then the brain device would produce an action mechanism in Zoe that is not reason-responsive. Not every loss of reason-responsiveness necessarily undermines moral responsibility, however.

Using a common example from responsibility literature, suppose that Zoe is attending the election celebration ceremony with Joseph and she freely consumes too much alcohol. As she attempts to leave the party and drive home, she crashes into the newly elected legislator’s Aston Martin causing irreparable damage. In her inebriated state, Zoe is not reason-responsive, but for all that, our intuition is that she is still blameworthy. How is this so on the present account? To answer this question, Fischer and Ravizza introduce the “tracing refinement:” “when an agent is morally responsible for an action that issues from a mechanism that is not appropriately reasons-responsive, we must be able to trace back along the history of the action to a point (*suitably related to the action*) where there was indeed an appropriately reasons-responsive mechanism.”⁹⁶ Applied to Zoe, there was a time prior to her inebriation when, ostensibly, her mechanism of action was reasons-responsive. It is this traceable history that makes sense of her moral culpability when she is less than reasons-responsive later.

The second factor that connects a person’s action process to moral culpability is that the mechanism of action is “their own.”⁹⁷ It is not just that Zoe’s action mechanism is reason-responsive, it must also be *her own*. Fischer and Ravizza summarize the point, “In order to be morally responsible for an action, the agent must act from a mechanism that is his own reasons-responsive mechanism.”⁹⁸

In order for a person to have guidance control, and therefore possibly be morally responsible, they need to be operating from a mechanism that is both reasons-responsive and *owned* by the person. What does it mean to “own” one’s reasons-responsive

⁹⁵ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 58.

⁹⁶ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 50-51. “Tracing” has its problems, especially for the epistemic condition; see Manuel Vargas, “The Trouble with Tracing,” *MSP* 29 (2005): 269–291; for a compelling response to Vargas see Kevin Timpe, “Tracing and the Epistemic Condition on Moral Responsibility,” *TMS*, 88, no. 1–2 (2011): 5–28.

⁹⁷ For a divergent account see Susan Wolf, *Freedom within Reason*.

⁹⁸ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 81.

mechanism? Fischer and Ravizza answer by specifying three criteria for the important concept of “owning,” or what they call “taking responsibility” (as in, she needs to “take responsibility” for herself).⁹⁹ First, an individual needs to “see” themselves as an agent, as one who is capable of at least some effectual actions in the world that stem from choice, desire, and intention.¹⁰⁰ Deep, sustained, or sophisticated philosophical reflection is not necessary; rather, the person merely needs to take it as though they are capable of performing actions that are not merely instinctual or programmed. Furthermore, there must be a historical connection in that the person needs to see themselves as having a historical thread of agency—as having at least some past actions that are due to choice, desire, and intention. The second criterion is that the person needs to see themselves as one who is the right kind of being for reactive attitudes in certain contexts.¹⁰¹ As with the previous criterion, extended reflection is not needed, but only the mental posture of seeing oneself to be an agent among other agents in a moral community that engages in praise and blame. In terms of this project, this second criterion of owning requires agents to see themselves as persons. The third criterion stipulates that the previous two criteria must be appropriately based on evidence.¹⁰² The “evidence” that Fischer and Ravizza seem to be aiming for is something like “connection to reality”: the individual must understand themselves as an agent who is part of an agentive community, one who acts in the world and participates in the moral community. What connects these three criteria to moral responsibility is the “mechanism” or the process that leads to action. This mechanism of action must be owned by the person, which means that the person sees their action as flowing from their (historical) agency and that they are part of the moral discourse in an agentive community. While it may seem esoteric, this additional component to guidance control helps to make sense of the intuition that psychosis, brainwashing, or mind-control devices are responsibility-undermining factors: they are action mechanisms not *owned* by the individual because they do not stem from a mechanism that is grounded in the individual’s own agency and history. For example, if Zoe goes to vote and at the last minute decides that she does not want the Independent candidate and initiates the action to vote, say, Democrat, and Joseph activates the brain

⁹⁹ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 207-39.

¹⁰⁰ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 210.

¹⁰¹ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 211.

¹⁰² Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 213.

device causing Zoe to instead actually vote Independent, then it is true that Zoe's action mechanism is not reasons-responsive but, importantly, it is also not her own.

Thus, one of the necessary conditions for moral responsibility is control, and in order for that condition to be met, an individual must have guidance control. Guidance control is the ability to act freely by way of a mechanism that is both reasons-responsive and owned by the individual. Applying this to temptation (more fully below in section 3.3): in order for (T) to be possibly morally blameworthy, a TE must have guidance control over their desire for X/ϕ . This is not the only condition for moral responsibility, however. There is also a second necessary condition for moral responsibility—an epistemic condition, to which I now turn.

3.2.2 *The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility*

Fischer and Ravizza helpfully clarify the control condition for moral responsibility. However, they intentionally do not offer an examination of the epistemic criterion but they do note that their theory could be supplemented with any number of views on the epistemic condition.¹⁰³ When philosophical discussion of moral responsibility got early momentum, the control condition was the prize topic and the epistemic condition received very little attention.¹⁰⁴ No doubt, the focus on control has to do with the much larger debate on human freedom, but the scene has changed and the epistemic condition is garnering much lively discussion and debate, although the details need not occupy us here. My contention is that, barring thoroughgoing skepticism about responsibility, (T) can be interfaced with whatever specific view of responsibility one adopts. Yet, in order to get clear on whether (T) could ever be a culpable experience, it is necessary to lay out some minimal criteria for the epistemic condition. Unlike the control condition, the epistemic condition has a narrower scope of discussion in the philosophical literature, which helps us develop a more generalized account of this specific criterion.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*, 13n21. The reasons-responsive aspect does not address the epistemic criterion.

¹⁰⁴ Fernando Rudy-Hiller, "The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility."

¹⁰⁵ To date, there has not been the kind of landmark work on this criterion like Fischer and Ravizza's work on the control condition. The account here is primarily informed by Rudy-Hiller, "The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility." Other key works include: Zimmerman's *Living With Uncertainty*, mentioned above; Manuel Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: OUP, 2013); Carl Ginet, "The Epistemic Requirements for Moral Responsibility," *PP*, 14 (2000): 267–277; Neil Levy, *Consciousness and Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: OUP, 2014); Alfred Mele, "Moral Responsibility for Actions: Epistemic and Freedom Conditions," *PE* 13, no. 2 (2010): 101–111; Rik Peals

Our common intuition is that ignorance can, under certain circumstances, exculpate a person from moral responsibility, which means that the intuition assumes that some kind of knowledge or awareness is necessary for responsibility. Aristotle provides greater specificity to what is often merely intuitive in analyzing the kinds of ignorance needed for a moral excuse. He envisions six relevant factors: (i) the agent, (ii) the act, (iii) the situation and circumstances of the act, (iv) the instrument, tool, or object (if there is one), (v) the end or goal, and (vi) the manner of the act (e.g., gently or violently).¹⁰⁶ In terms of the contemporary discussion, the epistemic condition for moral responsibility requires, roughly, that a person know or be aware¹⁰⁷ of themselves, their action, or action set—its manner, the situation and circumstances in which it occurs, its moral significance, its consequences, and alternatives to it—and their goals or aims with the action or action set. Evaluating the precise degree to which each factor here is relevant would lead to protracted controversy and be beside the present point.¹⁰⁸ Thus, I move forward by articulating a workable account of the epistemic criterion that can interface with (T) and serve as a test of whether it is possible to be morally culpable for having the experience of (T).

To be morally responsible in relation to the epistemic condition, then, is to have some awareness, or culpable ignorance, about one's actions, desires, or intentions. I contend that this awareness involves either (i) being occurrently mindful of or attentive to the various aspects of the action under scrutiny (its manner, the situation and circumstances in which it occurs, its moral significance, etc.) or (ii) being dispositionally mindful of or attentive to the various aspect of the action.¹⁰⁹ Regarding (i): to be

(ed), *Perspectives on Ignorance from Moral and Social Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2017); George Sher, *Who Knew? Responsibility without Awareness* (New York: OUP, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ *NE*, 1111a.15-19.

¹⁰⁷ Due to debates over the nature of knowledge, and especially debates regarding knowledge as justified, true belief, some philosophers prefer “awareness” as the epistemic condition over “knowledge,” since knowledge is a stronger and more contested standard. Cf., Gideon Rosen, “Kleinbart the Oblivious and Other Tales of Ignorance and Responsibility,” *JPh* 105, no. 10 (2008): 591–610; Rik Peels, “What Kind of Ignorance Excuses? Two Neglected Issues,” *PQ* 64, no. 256 (July 2014): 478–96; and Baron, Marcia, “Justification, Excuse, and the Exculpatory Power of Ignorance,” in *Perspectives on Ignorance from Moral and Social Philosophy*, ed. Rik Peels (New York: Routledge, 2017), 53–76.

¹⁰⁸ Indeed, due to what appears to be the intractable nature of the problems for moral responsibility that arise from sophisticated considerations of the epistemic standard, there is much skepticism about moral responsibility in general. Rosen explains this well, see Rosen, “Skepticism about Moral Responsibility,” 295-313.

¹⁰⁹ For those who defend an occurrent awareness only view, see Michael Zimmerman, “Moral Responsibility and Ignorance,” *Ethics* 107, no. 3 (1997): 421–2; Ginet “The Epistemic Requirements for Moral Responsibility,” 270; and Rosen “Skepticism about Moral Responsibility,” 309.

occurently mindful/attentive means to be, in the moment of action, actively and cognitively aware of the necessary epistemic components—its manner, the situation and circumstances in which it occurs, its moral significance, and so forth. Occurrent mindfulness/attentiveness cannot be the only requirement for the epistemic condition of moral responsibility. If that were the case, then the implication would be that only those who are actively thinking about all the accoutrements of action (manner, morality, outcomes, etc.) could be morally responsible. Yet, that is intuitively problematic, as we see by considering Joseph and Zoe again.

Joseph is campaigning for his intrepid underdog Independent candidate and he cannot contain his passion and excitement. Zoe has heard the speeches, she has read the material, and she has become fatigued with all that Joseph has to say. Zoe tells Joseph multiple times that she would like for him to stop haranguing her about the upcoming election. At their next interaction, Joseph launches into the stump speech again, and Zoe stops him short with a shout of indignation and accusation of culpability. But Joseph pleads not guilty on the grounds that he was so caught up with the excitement of the campaign that he had been mindless about her earlier requests that he not influence her voting decision. Is Joseph innocent? Suppose he is telling the truth: he was not currently thinking about, and thus not occurently aware, of Zoe's requests not to campaign. Does that exculpate him?

If the epistemic requirement is that a person must be occurently aware of their actions (manner, consequences, etc.), then Joseph is not culpable. However, this seems problematic because intuitively Joseph *is* an appropriate target of Zoe's reactive attitude both regarding attribution and regarding accountability. Something is missing if all we have for the epistemic condition is occurrent awareness. Thus, adding the requirement of *dispositional* awareness is necessary. As I argue next, if dispositional awareness is factored into epistemic culpability, then occurrent awareness, which is entailed and covered by dispositional awareness, must definitely suffice for culpability.

Dispositional awareness means that "tacit, dormant, dispositional, or unconscious beliefs can, at least in many cases, amount to the kind of awareness that is required for moral responsibility."¹¹⁰ Joseph's dormant awareness of Zoe's request is enough that he

For those who defend a dispositional awareness view, see Ishtiyaque Haji, "An Epistemic Dimension of Blameworthiness," *Ph&PhenR* 57, no. 3 (1997): 531; Peels, "Tracing Culpable Ignorance," 580; and Timpe, "Tracing and the Epistemic Condition on Moral Responsibility," 18.

¹¹⁰ Rudy-Hiller, "The Epistemic Condition for Moral Responsibility," §3.1.

should have known, such that his “ignorance” is either not actual ignorance (that is, he did not, not know; he was not occurrently aware of what he knew) or it is culpable ignorance (that is, he should have known, given prior conversations with Zoe). However, the degree to which a person must be occurrently or dispositionally aware is a delicate and difficult issue, but we can fairly approximate for present purposes that something in the neighborhood of awareness is needed to meet the cognitive condition of culpability.

We can now state a general account of the epistemic condition. To meet the epistemic condition for moral responsibility, a person must be culpably ignorant of or have some appropriate degree of occurrent or dispositional awareness of their action(s), the circumstances and manner of their action(s), the consequences of their action(s), the moral valence of their action(s), and possible alternatives to their action(s).

To be morally responsible, then, requires that a person (i) have guidance control of their action(s)—that their action(s) stem from a mechanism that they own and that is moderately reasons-responsive—and (ii) have either dispositional or occurrent awareness of, or be culpably ignorant of, the morally salient features of the act(s)—manner, circumstance, outcomes, alternatives, etc. In light of this step in my unfolding analysis, we now ask the important question: is (T) ever morally culpable?

3.3 (T) is Sometimes Morally Responsible, but Not Always

In order to answer the question regarding whether a person can ever be morally responsible for (T), I begin by recalling the conditions of (T):

- (1) TE has a desire for some state of affairs, X, or action ϕ .
- (2) TE’s desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action in order to do ϕ or obtain X.
- (3) TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad.
- (4) TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/ ϕ , some other psychic state, Y, that conflicts with X’s obtaining, with desiring X, or with ϕ -ing.
- (5) TE sees Y as morally superior to X/ ϕ .
- (6) TE [succumbs to temptation] pursues actualization, in some capacity, of the desire for X or ϕ and gives up, rejects, or ignores the psychic conflict, Y.

To direct us to the heart of the discussion, I contend that temptation succumbed-to could be morally culpable. After all, (T) is connected to actions or desires that the temptee believes are bad. Thus, if someone succumbs to temptation, and the temptation involves something they believe is bad, then it is coherent that what they do in succumbing is

morally blameworthy. Of course, not every temptation to which a person succumbs is going to be blameworthy since it remains possible to succumb to temptation and not meet one or both of the conditions for moral responsibility. We must now ask: what about having the experience itself—could the experience ever make a person morally blameworthy?

There is an obvious set of temptation experiences that are always going to fail the conditions for moral culpability. Temptation essentially involves desire and even if appetitive desires, which are mere physical drives, are ruled out (I argued for this in Chapter 3 section 3.1), it remains possible that some tempting desires that persons have arise uncontrolled. These uncontrolled desires still meet the criteria for (T), but they fail the control condition for moral responsibility. They fail because they are not aptly reasons-responsive, although they can be part of a person's own mechanism of action. Put differently, sometimes (T) comes from a desire outside the control of the temptee—and that loss of control is sufficient to undermine the culpability of the temptation.¹¹¹ Hence, a person is not morally blameworthy for all experiences of (T). But this does not mean that a person is never blameworthy for an experience of (T). Further careful analysis will show this to be the case.

To argue for the possibility of (T) being blameworthy, I return to a contention I made in Chapter 3 section 3.1.3. There I argued that the desires relevant to (T) are occurrent rather than merely standing—the desire needs to play an active role in the temptee's psyche. I further contended that occurrent desires can stem from a tendency that has formed from frequent occurrent desires of the same type—dispositional-standing desires. This was grounded in Alfred Mele's refined conception of standing desire: a standing desire for X is the ongoing tendency to desire X based on having had frequent occurrent desires for X.¹¹² A person's experience of (T) that is most apt for being blameworthy are those experiences of (T) that have occurrent desires for X that trace from a standing-disposition to desire X. These desires are most closely connected to the conditions of moral culpability because they can be subject to guidance control and the appropriate epistemic awareness. The following case will draw these points together and show that temptation is possibly blameworthy.

¹¹¹ This likely gets close to the description of temptation in the minds of those who argue that it is not ever culpable. This conception, however, is too narrow of a description of temptation.

¹¹² Alfred Mele, *Motivation and Agency* (New York: OUP, 2003), 35.

Levi has a desire to cheat on his upcoming ethics exam. This desire traces from a history of cheating in all of his classes: Levi is a serial cheater. This was not always the case, though. Before University, Levi was an honest student who made good grades. Since coming to University and becoming involved in a social club, he is not motivated to study. However, he needs to make good grades to keep his scholarship and to graduate with honors because he plans to go to Law School. The first couple of times cheating was psychologically hard but now it comes easily and with the assurance of good grades. Levi believes that it is very unlikely that the professor will catch him. Yet, if assured that he would be caught, he would not cheat. Levi recognizes that it is wrong to cheat and he signed the University academic integrity code as a first-year student. In addition, he has been reminded by every course syllabus that cheating is a violation of academic integrity, and Levi recalls the ethics professor's semi-serious joke about the irony of cheating on an ethics exam. There was also the time last semester when the writing professor caught him looking at his smart watch for the answers. She was forgiving but warned Levi that it should be a one-time occurrence and another instance could mean failure or expulsion. He certainly does not want to fail or be kicked out, and, when he is honest with himself, he does not want to cheat. Levi knows that making more time for studying is morally better than cheating.

In this scenario, Levi is tempted to cheat: he meets all of the conditions for (T). Further, he also meets both conditions for moral responsibility. First, he has guidance control over his desire to cheat because his desire is both reason-responsive and his own. It is reason-responsive since if he were assured that he would be caught, he would refrain from cheating. Thus, Levi's action mechanism is moderately responsive to reason. Furthermore, Levi's desire comes from a process that he owns (he is not under any psychosis, hypnosis, drugs, manipulation, etc.). It is not an ephemeral desire because it is one that he has "cultivated" over time. Therefore, Levi's action mechanism is his own. Second, Levi meets the epistemic condition for moral responsibility: he has the appropriate awareness of his actions. He is aware that using his smart watch to store answers is cheating (the action), that cheating is prohibited by both the professor and the university (the situation and moral valence of the action), that getting caught could mean failure or expulsion (the possible consequence of the action), and that studying more is the better avenue (the alternative actions). Hence, Levi's temptation meets the conditions of blameworthiness, demonstrating that he is the appropriate target of accountable blame. Although many real-world instances appear to mirror Levi's case, even if there are no such instances, my argument here nevertheless shows in principle that (T) can sometimes

make a person blameworthy. Thus, while not always so, (T) can be, in some cases, blameworthy.

3.4 (T), Blameworthiness, and Analytic Moral Theology

As I argued in Chapter 1 (section 3.1), analytic moral theology finds authoritative sourcing in biblical and theological data. In Chapter 2 (section 2.8) I attended to the relevant biblical data on temptation. What is pertinent from that study for the present argument is that temptation is a morally negative experience in the New Testament. In Chapter 3 (sections 3.3.1 and 3.5) I marshaled arguments from moral psychology and philosophy of action to show that (T) is consistent and coherent with both the biblical data and analytic moral philosophy. The present chapter has further contributed to this running contention by arguing that (T) can sometimes be a blameworthy experience for the temptee. Therefore, the account of (T) that I establish in this project is consonant with biblical-theological data and, hence, is a contribution to the developing field of analytic moral theology.¹¹³

4 Conclusion: Review of the Argument and its Location in the Project

In this chapter I have argued for two claims. First, that the experience of (T) is not the same as *akrasia* or weakness of will but that sometimes (T) succumbed-to can be *akrasia* or weakness of will. This argument is itself a creative, substantial contribution to the scholarship on *akrasia*/weakness of will. Moreover, this contention further distinguishes (T) from other related moral phenomenon and advances the main thesis of this project by giving an analytic account of the nature of temptation that is coherent.

The second argument of this chapter is that temptation is sometimes morally blameworthy under a standard and widely accepted criteria of moral responsibility. A person who experiences (T) can do so while retaining guidance control and being aptly aware of their actions, and, thus, (T) can be a morally blameworthy experience. This second argument enforces the main contention of this project by showing that (T) involves moral evaluation of a person's interior life. Moral virtue acquisition is necessarily attentive to a person's desires, motivations, intentions, goals, and action.

¹¹³ A next step in a larger project would be to interface (T) with a theology of sin. A key question that remains to be answered is whether an experience of (T) is ever sinful. This is beyond the scope of the current argument but shows the potential theological fruit of analytic moral theology.

Therefore, if the possibility of (T) is necessary for moral virtue formation, (T) must also be morally attentive to a person's desires, motivations, intentions, goals, and actions. Hence, interfacing (T) with moral responsibility further highlights the moral role that desires, motivations, intentions, goals, and actions have in experiences of temptation.

The next and penultimate chapter argues for the second half of the project's main thesis that the possibility of temptation is necessary for the development of moral virtue. The veracity of that thesis relies fundamentally on the nature of temptation, hence the close analytic attention of the argument of Chapters 3 and 4. This thesis also relies on the nature of moral virtue and how it is developed in human persons. Chapter 5 argues for a neo-Aristotelian conception of moral virtue and virtue formation and argues that the possibility of (T) is necessary for the development of moral virtues.

Chapter 5: The Role of Temptation in Moral Virtue Formation

1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have formed a conceptual foundation, establishing the precise analytic nature of temptation. This chapter will rest on those intermediate conclusions and press the argument to its ultimate conclusion. Chapter 3 argued for a very particular synthetic, constructive account of temptation, (T), critically navigating alternative theories, which included the common-thread ideas and theological parameters found in Chapter 2 and then construing these in terms of the necessary conditions for genuine (T) to occur. Employing analytic methods, that chapter attended closely to the logical outworking of the technical definition of (T) to ensure it was consistent, coherent, and informed. Chapter 4 further clarified the nature of (T), and again, engaged the methodology of analytic moral theology by distinguishing (T) from *akrasia* and weakness of will and by investigating how (T) relates to moral responsibility. Now, this chapter first examines the nature of virtue formation interpreted on a neo-Aristotelian account.¹ Second, and most important, for this project, the current chapter marshals all of the foregoing sub-arguments in defense of the claim that in order to form moral virtues by habituation, an agent needs an environment that is conducive to and allows for the possibility of the experience of (T).

If my account of (T) in Chapters 3 and 4 is accurate to moral reality, then that account should be compatible with a variety of ethical systems, particularly to the extent that they also are accurate to all moral realities involved. However, at this point in the developing argument, it is not too obvious to state that (T) seems to have a natural affinity for an Aristotelian account of virtue ethics.² On the one hand, the philosophical exposition of (T) that I defend should find purchase with consequentialists or

¹ For an overview of Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, see Nancy E. Snow, “Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: OUP, 2018), 321-42. The approach I take is neo-Aristotelian and as such neither purports to be an exegetical analysis of Aristotle nor a work that aims to think Aristotle’s thoughts after him. Rather, like all neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, the aim here is to take important cues and grounding assumptions from Aristotle (cf., Sukaina Hirji, “What’s Aristotelian about Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics?” *Ph&PhenR* 98, no. 3 [May 2019]: 671-96).

² For non-Aristotelian accounts of virtue see Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (New York: CUP, 2001); Michael Slote, *Moral Sentimentalism* (New York: OUP, 2010); and Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic Account* (New York: OUP, 2003).

deontologists, or other varieties of normative approaches.³ So long as the normative theory makes space for conative attitudes, then the account I offer could be helpfully included. On the other hand, my account fits especially well and closely with those ethical systems that make the agent rather than actions or consequences central. In this light, a strong case can be made that virtue ethics—with strong ancient and medieval roots and with a resurgent revival in contemporary analytic moral philosophy and moral theology—makes best sense of all the moral and theological data.⁴ Likewise, my more specific claim that (T) makes best sense of the data pertaining to that specific moral reality provides an auspicious starting point for further reflection in the area of moral theology.

There are two core pieces to the project's thesis that need conceptual clarification: (i) the nature of temptation and (ii) the nature of moral virtue formation. Part of the analytic theological-philosophical method is breaking apart complex propositions into their component parts and arguing for their consistency and coherency. Applying this method to the nature of temptation required more groundwork because there was less theological and philosophical background. Therefore, arguing for (T) occupied more territory in this project than will arguing for the nature of virtue formation. Virtue ethics has a long and rich history and thus I will limit my arguments in this chapter in two ways. First, I will not defend virtue ethics in general from the ground up. And, second, I will contend for a general but widely applicable account of virtue formation within the neo-Aristotelian approach to virtue ethics. My main burden in what

³ For this tripartite conception of ethical theory see Marcia W. Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate*, Great Debates in Philosophy, ed. Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 1997). As Linda Zagzebski explains, “what makes a theory a virtue theory is that it focuses analysis more on the concepts involved in the evaluation of person than on act evaluation” (*Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* [New York: CUP, 1996], 78).

⁴ For a defense of Christian ethics as virtue ethics see: Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: GUP, 1996) and Brad J. Kallenberg, “Virtue Ethics,” in *Christian Ethics: Four Views*, ed. Steve Wilkens (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017). Cf., Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990); William P. Brown, ed., *Character & Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002); David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003); Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group, 2016); N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperCollins Pub., 2010); Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); Daniel A. Westberg, *Renewing Moral Theology: Christian Ethics as Action, Character and Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008); Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: NDUP, 1994); Linda Trinkhaus Zagzebski, *Divine Motivation Theory* (New York: CUP, 2004).

follows, therefore, will be to argue that the possibility of (T) as necessary for virtue formation is most fully understood when the notion of virtue formation is analyzed in the vein of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. Toward this aim, this chapter first briefly reviews how character is formed according to a broadly neo-Aristotelian virtue ethic, and second, explains (T)'s role or function in character formation.

1.1 Temptation and Virtue Ethics

In this section I argue that virtue ethics is the normative theory that makes best sense of the morality of (T). I have contended that (T) is a morally dubious experience (Chapter 3, section 3.3.1) and there I noted this negative evaluation is in terms of the something internal to the temptee. An experience of (T) is not yet an action in the typical sense important to deontological ethics, although, of course, it might lead to such action.⁵ Also, temptation is not typically the kind of consequence under review in normative systems that make outcomes central to moral evaluation. Instead, (T) involves states that are internal to the agent and this is precisely where the locus of attention is placed in virtue ethical theories.⁶ Indeed, the connection between an ethic of virtue and the nature of (T) that I exposit is clearly seen in light of Philippa Foot's notion of virtue as closely tied to volition and intention.⁷

I will argue that becoming virtuous requires the *possibility* of the experience of (T), although moral virtue formation does not require actually experiencing temptation, and, thus, *a fortiori*, it does not require succumbing to temptation. A central concern of virtue ethics is moral character formation, the making of an excellent person, which entails becoming virtuous. On the two opposite poles of moral character—the fully virtuous and the fully vicious—an agent would not experience temptation,⁸ but as an

⁵ Alfred Mele argues that practical decisions are actions and if he is correct, then (T) is a kind of action (*Aspects of Agency: Decisions, Abilities, Explanations, and Free Will* [New York: OUP, 2017], 7-12). Importantly, though, it is not the kind of action that matters for deontological ethics, which is the point here.

⁶ Ethics of character is one of the species of the larger family of ethical theory; or, as Robert Adams puts it, ethics of character is a *department* of ethical theory (*A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* [New York: OUP, 2006], 4).

⁷ Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices," in *Virtue Ethics*, ed. Stephen Darwall (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003), 105-20. Zagzebski differentiates, in agreement with Michael Slote, between happiness-based virtue ethics and motivation-based virtue ethics (*Virtues of the Mind*, 80-84), and, she argues, Aristotle follows most closely the happiness-based approach. One need not settle any dispute between the two approaches to make the connection between virtue and temptation here.

⁸ John McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" *PAS, Supplementary Volumes* 52 (1978): 13-42. Susan Stark, "Virtue and Emotion," *Nous* 35 (2001): 440-455.

agent moves either toward more fully virtuous or more fully vicious it is necessary that the person have both the capacity to experience temptation and an environment conducive to experiences of temptation. This recalls the parallel in my argument with John Hick's Irenaean Soul Making Theodicy and Michael Brady's argument regarding suffering and virtue.⁹ Hick's and Brady's positions are that in order for authentic character growth to take place, the world must be the kind of place where evil and suffering is possible (not necessarily actual, but at least *possible*). Likewise, I am making this same kind of conservative claim in the following line of reasoning: while actual experiences of (T) are not necessary for persons to become more nearly virtuous, experiences of (T) must be a real possibility. To establish this, I will begin with an analysis of the nature of character formation.

2 Moral Virtue Acquisition

In order to locate my conception of temptation within a framework of virtue ethics, I first consider how character is formed according to a neo-Aristotelian virtue framework.¹⁰ I pursue this particular framework because it pays special attention to the internal workings of persons, an interest which is not as central in other ethical frameworks.¹¹ Indeed, a neo-Aristotelian virtue approach especially focuses on the alignment of desires, reasons, and actions, which is a major point of contact with (T).¹² The final step in the argument (taken up in section 5 below) will be to show how the possibility of (T) is necessary for an agent to have the fullest opportunity for virtue formation. Put simply: the cultivation of virtue requires both the inner capacity to experience (T) and the possibility of (T).

⁹ John Hick, *Evil and the Love of God* (New York: Pallgrave MacMillan, 2010). Michael S. Brady, *Suffering and Virtue* (New York: OUP, 2018).

¹⁰ Daniel Russell notes that Aristotle himself did not seem to have a special process for virtue acquisition. Rather, Aristotle took moral growth to be a rather mundane process that mirrors skill acquisition ("Aristotle on Cultivating Virtue" in *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, ed. Nancy E. Snow [New York: OUP, 2015], 17-48). Thus the need for this argument to be neo-Aristotelian rather than strictly Aristotelian.

¹¹ Heather Battaly, *Virtue* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 10-12, 33-35.

¹² On this conception of Aristotelian virtue see Howard Curzer, *Aristotle & The Virtues* (New York: OUP, 2012), 332.

2.1 Anthropology: Human Nature Determines the Nature of Virtue and Virtue Formation

At the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asks about what makes for human excellence, for a degree of fulfillment of the kind of thing a human being is.¹³ In unfolding his answer to the question, Aristotle helped secure the idea for the whole Western intellectual tradition that a human being seeks to be moral, both to do moral things and to become a person with moral qualities.¹⁴ Thus, I start from the premise that human persons are moral agents that have as a key aim or drive to become morally well-developed; it is a purpose of their nature to pursue moral growth. This understanding entails that moral perfection is not the state into which humans are born. As David Carr reports, “none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature.”¹⁵ This truth is also attested to in traditional Christian theology.¹⁶ The First Epistle of John captures the theological commitment clearly: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1.8 ESV). And, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* summarizes the point, “Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.”¹⁷ Yet, healthy and sane humans by God’s common grace expressed in their nature pursue a state of moral goodness.¹⁸ This human pursuit is evident in the moral education of children and our communal practices of moral blame and praise.¹⁹ Parents generally have always sought to instill some moral code or sense of morality or even inner moral qualities in their children,

¹³ *NE*, 1097b22–1098a20. A note about citation of Aristotle’s *NE*: in this chapter, when I make a general reference to Aristotle’s ethics, without quotation and no appeal to a translation, I will simply cite *NE* followed by the Bekker reference; e.g.: *NE*, 1103a15. Otherwise, all citations will be from the Ross translation in the volume edited by Barnes, and will be cited with the full title of the work and the page number from Barnes’s edition [e.g., *NE*, 1742]

¹⁴ Richard Kraut, “Aristotle’s Ethics,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2018 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aristotle-ethics/>.

¹⁵ David Carr, “Character and Moral Choice in the Cultivation of Virtue” *Philosophy* 78, no. 304 (Apr., 2003): 222; cf., *NE*, 2.1103a.19.

¹⁶ Anthony N.S. Lane, “Lust: The Human Person as Affected by Disordered Desires,” *EQ* 78, no. 1 (2006): 21-35; Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995).

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 390, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p1s2c1p7.htm, accessed 21 July 2020.

¹⁸ This is not to say that humans by nature (i.e., without God’s enabling grace) pursue holiness or union with God. The state of sin and the effects of the Fall disorder and disrupt the human pursuit of goodness (cf. Lane, “Lust,” op. cit.). In this state, humans love the wrong things and love the right things wrongly (David K. Naugle, “St. Augustine’s Concept of Disordered Love and its Contemporary Application,” Southwest Commission on Religious Studies Theology and Philosophy of Religion Group [12 March 1993]; online https://www3.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/disordered_love.pdf, accessed 29 August 2020) Disordered though humans are, there remains enough of the *imago Dei* that humans pursue all things *sub specie boni*: under the guise of the good (Jensen, *Sin*, 15-40).

¹⁹ Norvin Richards, *The Ethics of Parenthood* (New York: OUP, 2010), 139-82.

indicating once again that humans begin life morally immature and pursue moral growth.²⁰ Two basic facts are revealed by this wide human endeavor: first humans are not morally impeccable; and second, there is a widespread effort to morally educate humans.²¹ These observations sound a core note to my argument: the process of moral education for humans is determined by human ontology.

Human ontology necessarily conditions and intertwines two core components of virtue ethics: (i) the specific nature of human moral excellence and (ii) the process of moral education.²² According to a neo-Aristotelian trajectory, moral excellence is inner states such as dispositions, habits, or tendencies that make the person who has them excellent.²³ Thus, moral growth depends on forming particular inner states like habits because moral education is conceptually dependent upon the nature of moral excellence. As Myles Burnyeat argues, “any tolerably explicit view of the process of moral development depends decisively on a conception of virtue.”²⁴ Julia Annas agrees when she argues that “virtue is to be understood in part by the way it is acquired.”²⁵ Therefore, on neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, there is a tight connection between both the nature of moral excellence and the process of virtue formation.

In the neo-Aristotelian vein, this process of virtue formation involves shaping the inner life of human agents.²⁶ As Christine McKinnon concludes, “Morality is thus deeply rooted in facts of human nature and the human needs, desires, and capacities to which these give rise.”²⁷ Virtue acquisition, then, is the process of seeking to instill character

²⁰ Of course there are those persons who are either morally insane (i.e., unable to respond to or “see” morality) or are sociopathic (i.e., they “see” morality but are unmoved by it) [Susan Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility” in *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Ferdinand David Schoeman (Cambridge: CUP, 1987)]. They, perhaps, would not make any attempt to moral education. The morally insane or sociopathic are not “healthy” and “sane” person who is taken as paradigmatic for my argument and therefore I leave those cases aside.

²¹ Richards, *The Ethics of Parenthood*, 164.

²² Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 119-20.

²³ Nathan Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation: The Key to Unlocking the *Nicomachean Ethics*” *EtPer* 15, no. 3 (2008): 309-42.

²⁴ M. F. Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to be Good,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, CA: UCAP, 1980), 69. [69-92] For a view that shares some commonality with Burnyeat but disagrees about the role of pleasure in virtue formation see Curzer, *Aristotle & the Virtues*, 318-40.

²⁵ Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 27.

²⁶ I use a number of phrases synonymously: “character growth,” “moral growth,” “character formation,” “virtue formation,” “virtue inculcation,” “virtue acquisition,” etc.

²⁷ Christine McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press Ltd., 1999), 5.

and intellectual traits that make for a virtuous or excellent human *agent*.²⁸ A key point for my argument is articulated best by McKinnon: “The human capacities that make morality possible include the abilities to be self-consciously aware of desires, to evaluate desires, and to deliberately endorse those that one approves of and to deliberately suppress those that one disapproves of.”²⁹ The human development of moral virtue therefore requires attending to psychic attitudes and it is this aspect of both the nature of virtue itself and virtue formation that requires the possibility of experiences of temptation. To argue for this connection between (T) and virtue formation, I contend that there are five essential elements to any virtue: (i) action, (ii) motivation, (iii) affection, (iv) judgment, and (v) habit.³⁰ I argue that, in order to become virtuous, these five essential elements must be at work in a person—and that these elements provide avenues that connect to the role of temptation.

3 The Five Necessary Elements of a Virtue

3.1 Action

The first essential element of a virtue is that nearly all moral virtues entail a characteristic activity or activities.³¹ For example, the virtue of temperance shows itself in adequately controlling, *inter alia*, one’s desire for and consumption of food. And generosity consists in the giving of one’s material goods to those who are in need. It is not sufficient for an agent simply to *intend* to carry out some characteristic action for that intention may not come to fruition in actual action:³² virtue is not acquired by mere

²⁸ This true whether it is purely internal states that are determinative to an agent’s being good, or whether being a good agent is a matter of having the traits that reliably bring about certain ends (Heather Battaly, *Virtue Ethics* [Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015], 25-28). My argument works whichever approach is held.

²⁹ McKinnon, *Character*, 5.

³⁰ These elements are adapted from Jason Baehr, “The Four Dimensions of an Intellectual Virtue,” in *Moral and Intellectual Virtues in Western and Chinese Philosophy*, eds., Chienkuo Mi, Michael Slote, and Ernest Sosa (eds.) (New York: Routledge, 2015): pp. 86-98. Howard Curzer offers five components of virtue from Aristotle’s account: (a) “the ability to identify which acts are virtuous in a given situation,” (b) “an understanding of why they are virtuous,” (c) “a desire for the virtuous actions for their own sakes,” (d) “dispositions of virtuous action”, i.e., reliable action, and (e) “dispositions of virtuous passion,” i.e., reliable feeling (*Aristotle & The Virtues*, 318). There is no inherent inconsistency between Baehr and Curzer. Baehr’s account is simpler and for that reason it guides the discussion here. Furthermore, Curzer’s (a) and (b) are covered by Baehr’s ‘judgment’ element and, therefore, the two accounts are sufficiently similar so as to need no adjudication.

³¹ Some virtues that do not seem to have any activity. For example, integrity does not seem to have its own characteristic action (McKinnon, *Character*, 38).

³² Alfred Mele, *Springs of Action* (New York: OUP, 1992), 248-55.

intention but rather by regular action.³³ The agent must go beyond the mere formation of a good intention, or claim to have a “good heart.”³⁴ *Attempting* to act appropriately is a fundamental and necessary condition for virtue formation.³⁵ Developing virtue requires actually engaging in some action or trying to engage in some action in an appropriate circumstance. Aristotle makes this clear when he offers the analogy, “men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre.”³⁶ Julia Annas affirms, “Aristotle is right here: virtue is like building in that learning to be brave is learning to do something, to act in certain ways, and that where we have to learn to do something, we learn it by doing it (not just reading a book about it).”³⁷ Consistently and (possibly) reliably doing virtuous actions are required in order to become virtuous. Doing is prelude to becoming. Virtues are, then, persistent inner states that can be established only by intentional, repeated actions. Simply put, virtue requires doing something, or at least attempting or exerting effort (which is distinct from intending) to do something.³⁸ Becoming virtuous requires more than “everyday virtuous action, actions that are in

³³ Bill Pollard, “Habitual Actions,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O’Connor and Constantine Sandis (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010), 76; cf. Richard Kraut, “Aristotle’s Ethics.”

³⁴ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 99.

³⁵ Three concerns ground the phrasing “attempting” and “trying.” First is the problem of moral luck: “moral luck” are the factors beyond the control of the agent that impact moral evaluation of the agent (Dana K., Nelkin, “Moral Luck,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2013 ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/moral-luck/>). Second is the problem that not all actions are successful and sometimes that is because the agent has made no effort to act. Virtuous action may not need to be successful, but persons developing virtue do need to make effort—attempt or try—to effect action in the world (on this connection between “attempting” and “trying” where it is presumed success is not had see Peter Heath and Peter Winch, “Trying and Attempting,” *PAS*, Supplementary Volumes, 75 [1971]: 193-227; and Jennifer Hornsby, “Trying to Act,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O’Connor and Constantine Sandis [Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010], 18-25). Third, and finally, not all virtue ethicists agree that virtuous action must be successful (e.g., Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* [New York: CUP, 2001]; cf. Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*). The argument here, however, does need not take a position on whether virtue-issuing actions are necessarily reliable.

³⁶ *NE*, 1743 (1103a.34).

³⁷ Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (New York: OUP, 2011), 22.

³⁸ There is debate over whether virtuous action has to be successful or not. Some contend that it is not enough that one merely attempt (and intend) to act but that one must act correctly (e.g., Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 136-7; Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* [New York: CUP, 2001]). Others disagree suggesting that the intention and attempt is enough (see Julia Annas, “The Structure of Virtue,” in *Intellectual Virtue*, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski [New York: OUP, 2003]; Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* [New York: OUP, 2011]; Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices,” in *Virtue Ethics*, eds. Roger Crisp and Michale Slote [New York: OUP, 1997]; James Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993]; and Michael Slote, *Moral from Motives* [New York: OUP, 2001]). My argument will work with either position therefore I do not settle this debate.

accordance with virtue in the sense of conforming to it.”³⁹ Becoming virtuous requires actions that spring from internal states that are themselves (becoming) excellent.

3.2 Motivation

A second requirement for virtue is right motivation.⁴⁰ Moral growth and being virtuous necessarily involves an agent’s volition being proper, aimed at the relevant good(s), such that the ensuing actions spring from the right kind of motivation.⁴¹ As Rui Sampio da Silva argues, “It is precisely because moral education and habituation are not a blind, nonrational, unreflective process that desires, as moulded inclinations, far from being brute causal forces, have a rational character.”⁴² On a neo-Aristotelian account, then, a virtuous person has as a necessary feature of their virtue “moulded inclinations,” which are rightly oriented desires.

To tie the first two virtue elements of action and motivation together with the forthcoming remaining dimensions, let us consider an example from Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*: the case study of Ebenezer Scrooge.⁴³ Scrooge’s being generous to those he encounters after his last ghostly visit requires not only that Scrooge *act* to give material goods to the needy but that his action be *motivated* by some “distinctively moral end” (for example, justice, love for neighbor, or the alleviation of suffering).⁴⁴ For example, Scrooge’s virtuous motivation could be that generosity is intrinsically good or that giving to those in need works to bring about their flourishing (and thus his own). Therefore, Scrooge’s being virtuous is not commensurate with his desires or motivations being misaligned toward either non-moral end or immoral ends. For example, if Scrooge gave from his material goods merely because it would cause others to honor him, then his motivation is wrong and his giving is not generosity in that instance. Thus, in order to be virtuous, a person must (attempt to) engage in characteristic activity/activities of virtue and be properly motivated by moral ends.

³⁹ Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtuous Action,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, eds. Timothy O’Connor and Constantine Sandis (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2010), 317.

⁴⁰ Robert Audi, “Acting from Virtue,” *Mind* 104, no. 415 (Jul., 1995): 450.

⁴¹ Baehr, “Four Dimensions,” 88.

⁴² Rui Sampio da Silva, “Moral Motivation and Judgment in Virtue Ethics,” *Philonsorbonne* 12 (2018): 110.

⁴³ In the following I do not argue that Scrooge is vicious. Perhaps he really is a man of principle as Scott C. Lowe suggests (although he is quite clear that Scrooge is not morally perfect) in “Ebenezer Scrooge: Man of Principle” *Think* 23, no. 8 (Autumn 2009): 27-34.

⁴⁴ Baehr, “Four Dimensions,” 88.

3.3 Affection

The third necessary condition for becoming a virtuous person pertains to possessing the right kinds of affections.⁴⁵ Being virtuous requires a person to align their affections to be congruent with the good, which is the telos or goal of the virtue in question.⁴⁶ According to a neo-Aristotelian approach, “a person’s nonrational desires must come to be in accord with practical reason’s grasp of what is good so that she acts easily and harmoniously and takes pleasure in following reason’s dictates.”⁴⁷ The point here is that the person developing virtue comes to “learn to enjoy doing it, to come to take pleasure—the appropriate pleasure—in doing it.”⁴⁸ Resuming our Scrooge example: if we suppose that in giving the giant turkey to the Cratchit family, Scrooge feels resentment or umbrage, then he is not actually being generous because he does not have the right affection. At a minimum, Scrooge should feel joy—or satisfaction or some other positive emotion—in performing his generous act; the right kind of affection must be connected to this virtue.

The argument at this stage, then, is that character formation requires being rightly motivated to intend and attempt to do some action(s) that is characteristic of some virtue and that one have the right sorts of feelings associated with the virtue.

3.4 Judgment

The fourth and final condition needed for virtue development is judgment—which is the discerning and rational element in Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. Judgment is conceived as a “sensitivity” to three factors: (i) which virtue(s) is pertinent to the situation, (ii) when the characteristic activity/activities should be performed, and (iii) to what extent that activity/activities should be employed.⁴⁹ Within the virtue ethics framework, the

⁴⁵ Susan Stark, “Virtue and Emotion,” *Noûs* 35, no. 3 (2001): 440-55.

⁴⁶ Baehr, “Four Dimensions,” 90. Cf., *NE*, 1099a, 1175a.

⁴⁷ Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago, IL: UCP, 2008), 24.

⁴⁸ Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to Be Good,” 77. There is debate on this point: Curzer disagrees with Burnyeat regarding the role of pleasure in virtue formation and action (Curzer, *Aristotle & the Virtues*, 321-5). Certainly not every virtue is tied to a positive affection. For example, courage is the right balance of the affection of fear and fear is not a positive affection. The chief point is that the *appropriate* affection is connected to the motivation and characteristic activity.

⁴⁹ Baehr, 2015, 98. There is overlap between Baehr’s “judgment” and “prudence” in the virtue ethic literature. Nathan Bowditch argues that prudence is the key to understanding Aristotle’s approach to character formation; see “Aristotle on Habituation: The Key to Unlocking the *Nicomachean Ethics*” *EtPer* 15, no. 3 (2008): 309-42.

virtuous person is able to identify which action(s) is virtuous and to understand why it is so.⁵⁰ In other words, “virtuous agents are those who respond at the right time, to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive and in the right way.”⁵¹ Thus, for Scrooge to have the judgment dimension of the virtue of generosity in response to the Cratchit family, Scrooge needs to (i) recognize that generosity is needed, (ii)/(iii) discern when, where, and how to act with generosity. On the neo-Aristotelian account that I have developed, for Scrooge to have all the necessary elements of the virtue of generosity, the following must be true of him. He will engage the characteristic acts of generosity by giving material goods to those who are in need. The actions of giving away his goods will be motivated by the right moral frame and be accompanied with the appropriate affections. Finally, Scrooge will judge aptly the right time to act, the appropriate materials to give, and the apt recipients of his materials. Importantly, these four dimensions of virtue also imply one other important factor pertinent to virtue development and the argument of this chapter.⁵²

3.5 Habit

The four necessary dimensions of virtue together entail a further element of virtue that needs to be made explicit: “virtue is not just a matter of performing certain right actions but also of the way in which these actions are produced. Truly virtuous action issues forth from knowledge, decision, and *stable* character.”⁵³ As Aristotle observes, “moral excellence comes about as a result of habit.”⁵⁴ In a neo-Aristotelian view, then, “we acquire virtues largely by habituation, that is by acting as if we already possess them.”⁵⁵ Humans “instill virtues by encouraging habitual performance of certain actions.”⁵⁶ Thus,

⁵⁰ Curzer, *Aristotle and the Virtues*, 318.

⁵¹ Carr, “Character and Moral Choice,” 219, 221.

⁵² A sixth essential component to virtue formation that is not pertinent to the argument of this chapter is the role of a teacher/exemplar and community in the process of character development. James K.A. Smith captures the point exactly, “We learn the virtues through *imitation*” (Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 18). Cf., Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 16-32 and Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (New York: OUP, 2017). On the essential role of a person’s community in their developing virtues see Lawrence Blum, “Community and Virtue,” in *How Should We Live: Essays on the Virtues*, ed. Roger Crisp (New York: OUP, 1998), 231-50.

⁵³ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 23 (emphasis added).

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, revised by J.O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, the Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol., 2 (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1984), 1742. Cf., *NE*, 2.1103a.18.

⁵⁵ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 23.

⁵⁶ McKinnon, *Character*, 31.

there is a crucial synergism between “doing” and “being.” Yet this habitual performance is not a mere repetition or mimicking: the virtuous person must come to “own”—to become “self-directed” regarding—the motives, affections, and characteristic activity.⁵⁷ Habits are formed over time and virtuous habits are “settled dispositions”—they are part of *who we are as persons* and that takes time to register or lock-in, as it were.⁵⁸ Thus, for Scrooge to be virtuous is ineluctably linked to what he does—in this case, it requires that his generous actions become *habit*. Perhaps Dickens attempts to capture this in Scrooge when he describes the reformed man as becoming as good a friend and man “as the good old city knew.”⁵⁹ In becoming habits, virtues are settled dispositions of his character (what both the ancients and the medievals would call “states of the soul”⁶⁰)—and this means that, in the case of Scrooge, he will have regularly practiced (or attempted to practice) generous acts, seeking to be rightly motivated, to have the right affections, and consistently judged rightly.⁶¹ In a sense, Scrooge needs to develop a kind of “automaticity” with regard to virtuous actions and temperaments.⁶² He needs to strengthen his moral dispositions to act and react in relevant circumstances. To amend Julia Annas’s example in this context: “For [Scrooge] to be generous, generosity has to be a feature of [*him*]—that is, a feature of [Scrooge] as a whole, and not just any old feature, but one that is persisting, reliable, and characteristic.”⁶³ Virtue acquisition is a process of concerted repetition and practice. Thus, it is not a mere rote or thoughtless habit—it is not a mere “routine.”⁶⁴ Indeed, “virtue is generated and increased only by reasoned habituation, not by mindless repetition.”⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 27, 70-73.

⁵⁸ McKinnon, *Character*, 29; Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 134; Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 329, 368; Arthur F. Holmes, *Shaping Character: Moral Education in The Christian College* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1990], 64; Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion,” in *Virtue Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp & Michael Slote [New York: OUP, 1997], 230

⁵⁹ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843; The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2018), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>, access 05 September 2020. I am grateful to Terry Cross for pointing me to Dickens’s conclusion here.

⁶⁰ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 126.

⁶¹ Virtues are not personality traits, however. On this see Christian Miller, *Character & Moral Psychology* (New York: Oxford, 2014), 8-18; and *Moral Character: An Empirical Theory* (New York: Oxford, 2013), 4-12.

⁶² On the relation of virtue formation to expertise and automaticity see Matt Stichter, “Virtue As A Skill,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: OUP, 2018), 64-6; and *The Skillfulness of Virtue: Improving Our Moral and Epistemic Lives* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).

⁶³ Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 8.

⁶⁴ Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 14, 16.

⁶⁵ Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, D.C.: GUP, 2017), 170.

The necessary features of action, motivation, affection, judgment, and habit capture the neo-Aristotelian account of virtue that is core to the argument of this chapter. It is this preceding account of moral development that constitutes the second key piece of the main thesis needing clarification. For an analytic defense of the main thesis (“the development of moral virtues requires the possibility of temptation”) to be clear, precise, and coherent it needs to articulate exactly what the nature of temptation is and the nature of moral virtue formation. This section has argued for the clarity and coherency of a neo-Aristotelian account of moral virtue formation. In the next section I briefly review the nature of (T) from Chapter 3 in order to prepare to forward the project’s main thesis in section 5 that the development of moral virtues requires the possibility of (T).

4 The Nature of Temptation, (T)

In Chapter 3 I argued that temptation is a subjective experience in which a temptee has a desire for some state of affairs or action, X, and coincident with that desire the temptee believes the desire is bad and has another psychic state that both conflicts with the first desire and is believed as morally superior to the first desire. Stated formally:

(T)_{def.} Temptation is an internal psychic conflict whereby a temptee, TE, desires some state of affairs, which state of affairs or the desire for the state of affairs the TE judges to be bad, and simultaneously the TE has some other psychic state that conflicts with the obtaining of or desire for the bad state of affairs and which state is seen as morally superior.

From this conception I argued for five individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for any experience of (T):

- (1) TE has a desire for some state of affairs, X, or action ϕ .
- (2) TE’s desire for X is such that it *could* motivate to action in order to do ϕ or obtain X.
- (3) TE believes X/ ϕ or the desire for X/ ϕ , or both, is bad.
- (4) TE has, concurrent with a desire for X/ ϕ , some other psychic state, Y, that conflicts with X’s obtaining, with desiring X, or with ϕ -ing.
- (5) TE sees Y as morally superior to X/ ϕ .

If one further necessary condition is met, the TE moves from a mere state of *experiencing* (T) to having *succumbed* to temptation:

- (6) TE pursues actualization, in some capacity, of the desire for X or ϕ and gives up, rejects, or ignores the psychic conflict, Y.

In the next section, I argue that moral virtue formation requires the possibility of experiencing (T). In completing this argument in the following section 5, my central claim is established.

5 (T) and the Development of Moral Virtue

We are now at the stage in the development of the argument to articulate and defend the main thesis of the project; namely, *if human agents are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*. I have argued that on a neo-Aristotelian account developing virtue requires four dimensions—actions, motivation, affections, and judgment—and that these four dimensions entail a further necessary element—habit. The argument of this section, then, is to locate the role that (T) plays in this neo-Aristotelian scheme of moral virtue development. The argument unfolds in two steps. First, I examine the motivational dimension by more closely connecting it to the Aristotelian notion of rational desire. And, second, I contend that in the habituation of virtuous rational desires the possibility of (T) is necessary. This second step builds on and solidifies the argument of the entire project.

5.1 (T) and the Five Necessary Elements of a Virtue

In light of the necessary elements of virtue identified in section 3, it is the motivational element that most clearly connects to (T). Recall that for some (attempted) action to be virtuous it must have behind it the right motivations. The tight connection in philosophy of action between motivations and desires is well-established, as I have shown in Chapter 3, section 3.2. This means that we can understand the motivational component of virtue as being about desire: for an agent to have any particular virtue that agent must, *inter alia*, have the right sorts of desires regarding the action and ends in view. Thus, the virtuous person is the one whose desires are for the right states of affairs, ends, and actions. Indeed, the virtuous person “wants to act virtuously.”⁶⁶ If, as Aristotle says, “[t]he activities of virtues are concerned with what conduces to the end,”⁶⁷ and desire moves the agent in action toward that end, then desire is a necessary aspect of virtue—

⁶⁶ Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 325; Bowditch uses ‘wanting’ and ‘desiring’ synonymously, as (326).

⁶⁷ *NE*, 1113b6.

and thus desire is a necessary part of virtue formation. Now, this is where (T) enters the formation process. To see precisely how (T) connects to virtue formation, let us tease out important details regarding desire and action.

Following Aristotle, Nathan Bowditch differentiates three types of desire.⁶⁸ First, there are appetites, which are the kinds of desires that spring from physical constitution. Second, persons have emotional impulses; some of these, like anger, are tied to action but not all. And, third, there are rational desires. Rational desires are more complex than either appetitive desires or emotional impulses, both of which are pre-reflective. Rational desires are wants for some state of affairs that requires recognizing a further desire that is the means to fulfilling the “desire at a distance.”⁶⁹

Each of these three types of desire may lead to action and therefore have a place both in being fully virtuous and in becoming virtuous. In a Chapter 3, section 3.1, I argued that (T) could involve appetitive desires, which I articulated as including both desires that stem from the physical nature of a person and emotional impulses. However, I contended that mere physical urges or pure emotional urges that are disconnected from action do not constitute the kind of desire needed for (T). Furthermore, I argued that desires of the kind that Aristotle and Bowditch call “rational desire” are certainly conducive to (T). Therefore, an experience of (T) could occur with any of the three kinds of desire Aristotle lists. However, rational desire is particularly pertinent to (T) and virtue formation because rational desires incorporate more of an agent’s psychic components: it intertwines both the conative and cognitive. Hence, my argument will focus on the confluence of rational desire, (T), and moral virtue formation.

5.2 Rational Desires and Virtue Formation

Rational desires are “desires to act in ways that fulfill ends endorsed by reason.”⁷⁰ More precisely, rational desires are desires for particular ends coupled with the desire to act on the means to those ends.⁷¹ These complex desires allow for a kind of moral development that appetitive and emotional desires generally do not.⁷² Humans often simply find

⁶⁸ Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 326; cf., *NE*, 1113a-1113b.

⁶⁹ Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 326.

⁷⁰ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 30.

⁷¹ Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 326.

⁷² Yet, it is not obvious that appetitive/emotional desires are completely outside of the sphere of formation. Indeed, while it may be more difficult to shape or conform one’s appetitive or emotional

themselves having appetitive or emotional desires without any effort to bring them about. Because of this immediate and uncontrolled occurrence, appetitive and emotional desires are neither blameworthy nor praiseworthy.⁷³ Two paradigmatic examples of appetitive desires and emotional desires are the desire to eat and anger, respectively.⁷⁴ Rational desires, however, operate differently. They can arise in ways similar to appetitive or emotional desire, but they are more centrally connected to a person's reasoning process because they are open to influence by practical reason.⁷⁵ Thus, rational desires are readily open to being morally shaped in a way that is different from appetitive or emotional desires. In order to become virtuous, then, persons must come to desire the right ends and to desire the right means to those ends. In other words, virtuous persons have excellent rational desires. Since "[m]ost people do not in fact have any virtues..." and being virtuous is not the natural state of human persons, they must endeavor to become virtuous.⁷⁶ Fortunately, there are two steps to habituating rational desire.⁷⁷

The first step in developing the habit of excellent rational desire is to develop the reflective ability to differentiate and morally evaluate a set of desires that are separate from one's appetitive or emotional desires.⁷⁸ In Chapter 3, section 3.5.2, I described this reflective ability as "evaluative ranking."⁷⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre argues that this process of developing evaluative-ranking is necessary for developing practical reason, which is itself necessary for the attainment of a virtuous character.⁸⁰ As he argues, in order to become an excellent practical reasoner, a person must "learn how to stand back in some measure from [their] present desires, so as to be able to evaluate them."⁸¹ In order to become morally virtuous, then, one must learn how to do evaluative-ranking. On a neo-

desires, surely this is possible; cf., James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 75-100.

⁷³ John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, "Introduction" in *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, eds. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993]. I defend this in Chapter 4, sections 3.2-3.3.

⁷⁴ Bowditch, "Aristotle on Habituation," 326.

⁷⁵ Bowditch, "Aristotle on Habituation," 312.

⁷⁶ Christian Miller, *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?* (New York: OUP, 2018), 20; cf., *NE*, 1103.a.19-25.

⁷⁷ Bowditch, "Aristotle on Habituation," 327.

⁷⁸ Bowditch, "Aristotle on Habituation," 327.

⁷⁹ Michael Bratman, "Toxin, Temptation, and Stability of Intention," in *Rational Commitment and Social Justice*, eds., Jules L. Coleman and Christopher W. Morris (New York: CUP, 1998), 60.

⁸⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Peru: IL, Open Court Pub. Co., 1999), 63-98.

⁸¹ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 72.

Aristotelian account, this first step in the process is greatly aided by a network of other persons who can both model and teach this distancing from and reflecting on one's conative framework.⁸² The person on the path to becoming virtuous learns to distinguish their appetitive/emotional desires from their rational desires and, further, to distinguish good rational desires from bad rational desires.

Consider this reflective distancing—evaluative-ranking—in terms of our Scrooge case study. Scrooge's becoming virtuous will require that he come to recognize the difference between his miserly emotional impulses and his rational desire for wealth accumulation as an end. In addition, being virtuous will require Scrooge to go beyond merely recognizing the difference between his emotional impulses and his rational desire. He will also need to morally evaluate his emotional impulses and his rational desire with its own end and desires to act on the means to that end. Scrooge's pathway to developing virtuous desires begins with his coming to rationally distance himself from his own desires, discern the differences between them, and recognize what counts as good or bad desires for ends and means. Having done this Scrooge has taken the first step toward developing the motivation needed in order to become virtuous. He also needs to take the following second step.

The second step in forming virtuous rational desires is to “develop the ability to satisfy these less specific rational desires [desires for ends] in a way that supports the development of virtuous character.”⁸³ In other words, this second step involves developing desires for actions that are morally good means to the good end(s) and developing the capacity to act on the good means to the end.⁸⁴ Developing the necessary motivational dimension of a virtue means learning to have desires for the right actions and those actions are ones that are conducive to bringing about not only the excellence of the actor but also the good end(s). Since humans are not naturally virtuous, the process to

⁸² MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 99-118; Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 327; Blum, “Virtue and Community,” Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 22.

⁸³ Bowditch, “Aristotle on Habituation,” 327.

⁸⁴ Bowditch connects this second step to developing the virtue of practical wisdom (“Aristotle on Habituation,” 328-30.). The conception of practical wisdom, *phronesis*, as desiring the right ends, desiring the right means to the right end, and acting on the means to the end is also endorsed by W. Jay Wood, “Prudence,” in *Virtues & Their Vices*, eds. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (New York: OUP, 2014), 37-58; Daniel A. Westberg, *Renewing Moral Theology: Christian Ethics as Action, Character, and Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 159-75. A fruitful line of further inquiry could examine the role (T) has in the formation of practical wisdom.

become virtuous is a process of learning to overcome contrary desires.⁸⁵ It is in sense that virtues are “correctives” to our misaligned desires.⁸⁶

Let us return once again to our case study of Ebenezer Scrooge. It is not enough that Scrooge simply come to desire, for example, that Bob Cratchit flourish. Rather, Scrooge also needs to desire the means to fulfill that end, and to come to have the capacity to act on the means to that end. In order to develop the virtue of generosity, the formerly miserly moneylender must come to desire the good of another person’s material well-being and to desire to meet that end by, for example, giving of his own abundant material wealth. Scrooge needs both to desire the act of giving his material goods, and then (attempt to) act in such a way as to fulfill the means to that end. In light of this analysis, I now turn to the analysis of the necessary connection between (T) and the formation of moral virtue.

5.3 Virtue Formation, Rational Desire, and (T): In Defense of the Project Thesis

The very nature of (T) requires that a person have the ability to distance themselves from their desires in order to reflect on and morally evaluate those desires.⁸⁷ Both conditions (3) and (5) in the necessary conditions for (T) above require a capacity to step back from the desires themselves, recognize the desires for what they are (for example, not mere appetitive drives) and evaluate the moral value of the desires. Temptation, therefore, requires evaluative-ranking. In one sense, then, developing the necessary first step in becoming virtuous with regard to rational desires corresponds to developing the psychic characteristics necessary to experience (T). In itself, this does not mean that (T) is necessary for virtue development. Rather, all the development of evaluative-ranking shows is that in so far as moral virtue formation requires rightly ordered (rational) desire, then moral virtue development will necessarily be coincident to developing the ability to experience instances of temptation.⁸⁸ Hence, this shows that the possibility of (T) is necessary component for virtue formation. For in order to differentiate and morally

⁸⁵ McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories, and the Virtues*, 32, 34.

⁸⁶ Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (New York: OUP, 1978), 9. Cf., Robert C. Roberts, who agrees that certain virtues are correctives but critiques Foot for overgeneralizing that all virtues are correctives (“Will Power and the Virtues,” *PhR* 93, no. 2 (1984): 232-3.

⁸⁷ This reflective distancing—evaluative ranking—necessary to (T) does not need to be long-form, drawn-out, or concerted philosophical reflection.

⁸⁸ Not that any temptee will consciously recognize that their experiences of temptation as experiences of the technical (T).

reflect on one's motivations and desires such that one can believe some of their desires are more morally desirable or praiseworthy than others (evaluative-ranking)—what moral virtue formation requires—there must be at least the possibility of (T) because (T) also requires evaluative-ranking. Stated simply: the motivational and evaluative capacity needed in order to become morally virtuous is also the motivational and evaluative capacity needed in order to experience (T). The conclusion is not that becoming virtuous and temptation are sometimes simultaneous experiences. Rather, the conclusion I have argued for is that moral virtue formation requires a reflective ability—evaluative-ranking—and that (T) also requires this reflective ability. Thus, if a person is to be able to develop moral virtues, then they need a reflective ability that also makes temptation possible. Hence, if the world is such that (T) is not possible, then that world is such that moral virtue formation is not possible. That is, the loss of evaluative-ranking in a world where temptation is not possible also means necessarily the loss of a required faculty in becoming/being virtuous. Therefore, *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary.*

Let us now apply the thesis of this project to our case study Scrooge to see how he would need a world in which (T) is possible in order to develop the virtue of generosity. Scrooge begins to give away his material goods to those in need—for example, Bob Cratchit and to the charity he initially rejects. In so doing, Scrooge learns to judge to whom he should give, what to give, when to give, and how much to give. Scrooge also comes to know what the good(s) is/are that orients his actions and that should direct his motivations and desires. But this process predictably encounters some complexities in the dimension of motivation. Since Scrooge is human, he is not naturally virtuous and this means that he will have times where his motivations conflict. On the one hand, he will desire to be generous, to give to the poor and destitute. On the other hand, Scrooge will desire to be stingy, to keep his earnings for himself. It is at this point where temptation and moral virtue formation overlap.

Suppose the two portly gentlemen raising money for the poor around Christmas approach Scrooge after he has made his commitment to be virtuous. They ask for a donation in order to provide “the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth.”⁸⁹ Scrooge wants, X, to tell them on their way and to keep his money for himself. He has for many years denied alms requests and his firm has made less profit this year because

⁸⁹ Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>, accessed 21 July 2020.

he has already been more generous than in the past. Scrooge is motivated to realize X. As he reflects on their request and his motivational state, Scrooge believes his desire for X is bad. Furthermore, Scrooge has a desire to, Y, be more liberal with his capital and, further, he believes Y is morally superior to X. Scrooge is experiencing temptation. And, for Scrooge to genuinely form his desires toward the virtue of generosity, he must have the ability to engage in evaluative-ranking: he has to be able to stand back from his desires and reflectively differentiate and morally evaluate his desires for X and Y. Since (T) also requires the same evaluative-ranking ability, in order for Scrooge to become virtuous he needs a world in which the experience of (T) is possible. Scrooge's case gives concrete form to the analytic argument of this project and shows that the argument has intuitive coherence along with its philosophical consistency.

5.4 The Argument Summarized

The argument of this section is readily summarized. If character formation is cast in terms of a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, then morality in human life is understood as the development of virtue. According to a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, the nature of virtue and the process of developing virtues are conditioned by human ontology. The philosophical and theological anthropological assumption is that humans are not naturally virtuous but can develop the virtues through habituating certain good actions, motivations, affections, and judgments. Developing virtue, then, requires attending to one's motivational-desire states. Thus, developing moral virtue necessarily requires an evaluative-ranking ability: being able to distinguish good desires from bad desires. Temptation also necessarily requires an evaluative-ranking ability. Therefore, in order to develop moral virtue, it is necessary that (T) is possible. The arguments of this section have brought together all of the conclusions from the previous sub-arguments in order to establish the main thesis of this project. This section has shown the truth of the conclusion that *if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*.

Except for a general appeal to theological anthropology in section 2.2 above, the argument so far has been grounded in natural philosophy. This is according to the method of analytic moral theology that I outlined in Chapter 1, section 3.4. Analytic moral theology aims to philosophically investigate moral notions in a way that is both analytically rigorous and fruitful for theological engagement. As the argument has developed in the various chapters of this project, I have connected the philosophical

conceptions either to their theological fountainhead or to potential pathways of further exploration. In Chapter 2 the biblical-theological data set the parameters for the nature of temptation. Chapter 3 argued for a technical conception of temptation that gave philosophically coherent robustness to the protoaccount of temptation found in the letter of James in the New Testament. Chapter 4, in section 3, gave more analytic handles to the biblical conception of temptation as morally problematic by arguing that temptation is morally blameworthy in some instances. In the next section I continue this process of interfacing biblical-theological considerations with the thesis of this project. I contend that my arguments and conclusions are coherent with Christian virtue ethics and other ethical systems that incorporate virtue theory. Thus, the philosophical investigation into the process of natural virtue development that I develop can be held as true consistently with Christian moral theology. However, there is a potential objection from a particular strain of Christian virtue ethics.⁹⁰ This theological worry comes from a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicist par excellence, Thomas Aquinas.⁹¹ Essentially, the problem for my account stems from the role of grace in human moral development. The next section, then, serves as a brief theological test of my thesis.

6 Thomistic Infused Virtue as a Theological Test for the Role of (T) in Virtue Formation

In section 3.5 above, I argued that from a neo-Aristotelian view, character formation is a process—thus, it is not immediate. Yet, Christian tradition raises a question for this neo-Aristotelian argument: if virtue formation is a process of habituation that takes time, experience, and practice,⁹² could divine grace make a person instantaneously virtuous?⁹³

⁹⁰ I was initially put on this line of argument by Kip Redick (Chair, Dept. of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Christopher Newport University) in his response to my presentation of arguments from this chapter at the 2019 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (William Seymour College, Hyattsville, MD). Redick did not make the Thomistic connection but pressed questions regarding how the Holy Spirit might be involved in virtue formation both in mundane ways and in miraculous ways. That question deserves much more attention than I can give here and is a ripe area for Christian virtue ethicists to explore, particularly from a Pentecostal perspective.

⁹¹ Eleonore Stump, “The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas’s Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions,” *FPh* 28, no. 1 (2011): 29-43. Cf., Brandon Dahm, “The Acquired Virtues are Real Virtues: A Response to Stump,” *FPh* 32, no. 4 (October 2015): 453-70.

⁹² Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 116-7.

⁹³ This question has another theological dimension. According to traditional Christian theology in order for a human to enter eternal life—heaven—they must be morally perfect, or holy. Humans in their glorified and eternal state “are hyper-willing to act rightly, and sinning is simply unthinkable, off the table, not a serious deliberative possibility for them” (Mark Murphy, “Perfect Goodness,” *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta [Spring 2014 edition], <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/perfect-goodness/>). Yet, it is clear that most humans do not die in a state of moral perfection. How can we make sense of the transition from moral imperfection to moral perfection in what seems to be instantaneous (cf., David

Could someone step into a divine version of Robert Nozick's "transformation machine"⁹⁴ where, by the work of God, they are transformed from, say, stingy to generous? If the answer to these questions is "yes," then it would seem that my thesis is defeated: the possibility of (T) is not necessary to moral virtue formation because God can make humans immediately virtuous by grace.

A theological commitment from Thomas Aquinas makes this problem more acute. Thomas famously argues for a category of virtues called the "infused virtues." These virtues are "infused" in humans by God's grace and thus do not need a process,⁹⁵ and, therefore, certainly do not need the possibility of temptation. According to Aquinas, God is the cause of some virtues in humans. In the *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Thomas concludes twice, "Therefore, it seems that there are moral virtues infused in us by God."⁹⁶ In the *Summa Theologica* he affirms: "Therefore some habits are infused into man by God."⁹⁷ Jennifer Herdt captures well the problem of infused virtue for a process-oriented account of moral development:

when it comes to the infused virtues, Aquinas seems to suggest that these skip the habituation gap; as their name indicates, they are not acquired through repeated action that strives to approximate an ideal or indeed through human actions at all but rather are given directly by God...The very distinction between acquired and infused virtue threatens the integrity of one or the other. If virtues acquired through human action fail to allow us to attain our true end, how can they be true virtues? And if the virtues that do allow us to attain our true end are not acquired through human action, in what sense do they perfect rather than undermine human agency?⁹⁸

Brown, "No Heaven Without Purgatory," *RelStud* 21, no. 4 [Dec. 1995]: 447-56)? The standard Catholic answer is to posit a time after death, Purgatory, to become virtuous (there is some Protestant support; see Jerry L. Walls, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* [New York: OUP, 2012]). Solving this interesting theological question is not the burden of my project. I note it to point to a potential line of study that can theologially and philosophically build on the arguments that I have offered.

⁹⁴ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 646.

⁹⁵ Thomas Aquinas also sees a worry here and takes it as an objection to his view that habits/virtues are inculcated via action (*Summa Theologica*, 1-2, Q. 51, Art. 2) and are connected to the nature of the thing acting (*ST*, 1-11, Q. 51, Art. 1): "Further, God works in all things according to the mode which is suitable to their nature: for *it belongs to Divine providence to preserve nature*, as Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* iv). But habits are naturally caused in man by acts, as we have said above (Art. 2). Therefore God does not cause habit to be in man except by acts" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Complete English Edition in Five Volumes, trans., Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol., 2 [New York: Benziger Bros., 1948], 1-2, Q. 51, Art. 4, Obj. 2). Thomas's own solution will give direction to my argument. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from the *Summa Theologica* will come from the Fathers of the English Dominican Province edition.

⁹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, trans. Ralph McInerney (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 66; *ST*, 1-2, Q. 52, Art. 4.

⁹⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, 1-2, Q. 51, Art., 4.

⁹⁸ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 82-3.

Herd't's final question clearly highlights the problem for the role of temptation in moral virtue formation. Above, in section 5.2, I have argued that moral virtue formation requires developing the ability to do evaluative-ranking. This ability to stand back from one's desires and morally evaluate them is necessary both for developing virtuous motivations and for experiencing temptation. Evaluative-ranking is part of what a neo-Aristotelian account posits as enabling persons to overcome the "habituation gap."⁹⁹ — moving from "everyday virtuous action" to "ideal virtuous action."¹⁰⁰ If evaluative-ranking can be by-passed in the acquisition of virtue, then, as it turns out, there is no need for an environment necessarily conducive to temptation.¹⁰¹ In this section I briefly address this line of objection by arguing that my account of (T) and its role in character formation is coherent with Thomas's idea of infused virtue.¹⁰² This section, then, gives further philosophical and theological coherence to my thesis.

6.1 The Nature of Thomistic Infused Virtue: Theological and Moral

One answer to the theological worry against my argument is to deny that there are any such things as infused virtues: if there are no divinely infused virtues, then there is no worry for my argument (at least not from this direction). While this is a possible and reasonable route from the perspective of natural philosophy, analytic moral theology

⁹⁹ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 23. Austin describes this gap as "the problem of causal circularity" (*Aquinas On Virtue*, 170).

¹⁰⁰ Hursthouse, "Virtuous Action," 317.

¹⁰¹ Aquinas seems to indicate this lack of human agency when he says, "God is the efficient cause of virtue" (*Summa Theologica*, Prima Secundae, trans. Laurence Shapcote, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, Latin-English Opera Omni [Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012], I-II 55.4, online: <https://aquinas.cc/64/66/~3685>).

¹⁰² This theological test of my thesis mirrors a long and ongoing debate in Thomistic scholarship over whether acquired virtues can coexist with the infused virtues. I cannot settle that dispute here. The aim of this section is to argue that there is space within Christian virtue ethics for my project's thesis. The current discussion was initiated by William Mattison and Angela McKay Knobel (Angela McKay Knobel, "Can Aquinas's Infused Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?" *SCE* 23 [2010]: 381-96 and William Mattison, "Can Christians Possess the Acquired Virtues?" *TS* 72 [2011]: 558-85). For those who affirm that Thomas allows acquired virtue and infused virtue to coexist in a person: see Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 99-113; Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 82-91; Michael Sherwin, "Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 29-52. For the opposing view, see Mattison and Knobel, op. cit. and Jean Porter, "Moral Virtues, Charity, and Grace: Why the Infused and Acquired Virtues Cannot Co-exist," *JMT* 8, no. 2 (2019): 40-66. My line of argument follows Sherwin, Herdt, Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, DC: GUP, 2017), and Jared Brandt, "Growth in Infused Virtue in the Work of Thomas Aquinas," (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2018), <https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2104/10369/BRANDT-DISSERTATION-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

must take seriously God's possible interaction and intervention in human moral life. It may be the case that God never intervenes in human character formation and thus does not infuse any virtue, but if it is possible that he does then we need to take seriously this theological test case. In what follows I argue that the solution comes from Thomas Aquinas himself. First, I offer a brief distinction between infused and acquired virtues to set the stage for the solution.

Thomas largely agrees with the neo-Aristotle account I have articulated, namely that acquired virtues are habituated through action. Infused virtues, however, are given by divine grace.¹⁰³ For Aquinas, virtues are good habits that orient the person who has them to an end/telos and the ultimate end—God—is beyond human nature. Therefore, humans need grace in order to orient to this superlative end.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the need for *infused* virtues—the settled dispositions that orient the one who has them toward the end that exceeds their natural capacities. Another way to conceive of the need for a distinction between two kinds of virtues is to think of their sphere of operation. In his elucidation of the difference, William Mattison describes the acquired moral virtues as “innerworldly” because their end is with common human affairs whereas the infused virtues are oriented beyond common human affairs and toward the ultimate end, God.¹⁰⁵ The power and ability to reach our divine end is not in us because that end is beyond us.¹⁰⁶ Infused virtues enable humans to attain their divine end. Nicholas Austin explains: “The *efficient* cause of virtue that directs us to the *final* cause of the vision of God can only be God Himself since there are no germs in our created nature that can germinate of themselves in a disposition to such an exalted end.”¹⁰⁷ If the idea here were only that God implants a seed of virtue into the human character that must be nurtured into full growth, then there would be no problem for my thesis that the possibility of (T) is necessary for moral

¹⁰³ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 445.

¹⁰⁴ *ST*, 1-2, Q. 52, Art. 4.

¹⁰⁵ William C. Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 326-30.

¹⁰⁶ Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 110.

¹⁰⁷ Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 175.

virtue formation.¹⁰⁸ Yet, this is not Aquinas's idea. Instead, at baptism God gives all of the theological virtues and gives them in full.¹⁰⁹

Michael Sherwin offers a case study that helps illuminate the conundrum that Aquinas's view raises but also shows the way toward a solution.¹¹⁰ In the late nineteenth century an Irish laborer and alcoholic, Matthew Talbot, had a dramatic conversion experience. After a week of shirking work and spending his pay on alcohol, Talbot is set to beg for more money from his friends to continue drinking. They refuse. As the story goes, that day Talbot gives up drinking, is baptized, and dedicates his life "to prayer, sacrifice, and the service of the poor."¹¹¹ But as is known all too well to human experience, even such a dramatic conversion is often accompanied by contrary desires and struggles to live fully into the new commitment of life. As Sherwin notes, "he still retained, especially in the beginning, a strong desire (and inclination) to continue drinking and to return to his former way of life."¹¹²

Let us consider Talbot's case in light of Thomas's moral theology. Talbot would have received the infused virtues at baptism and as they are received in full and perfectly, how could he continue to struggle?¹¹³ Austin summarizes the problem well: "If new converts find morally virtuous action difficult, and moral virtues are infused with grace, then either we question virtue's infusion at baptism or we have to account for the anomaly of moral virtues that lack the facility ordinarily characteristic of virtue."¹¹⁴ Two distinctions provide the needed solution.

First, in Thomas's conception, the infused virtues are chiefly *theological* virtues of faith, hope, and love. Although Aquinas does argue that there are infused moral virtues, these importantly differ from acquired moral virtues.¹¹⁵ What is central to infused virtues and what differentiates them from the acquired, natural virtues is that the object

¹⁰⁸ Although not his exact language, this is how Wadell describes the infused virtues. As he describes, it is not as though God "zaps" us and we are virtuous in some regard with no more work on our part. "On the contrary, as God's gifts to us, the infused moral virtues give us the capacity or potential for acts that help us attain God, but as with any other virtue that capacity has to be acted on, developed, and strengthened over time" (*Happiness and the Christian Life*, 111).

¹⁰⁹ Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 195; see *ST*, 1-2, Q. 62 and 3, Q. 69, Art. 4.

¹¹⁰ Sherwin, "Infused Virtue," 35-7.

¹¹¹ Sherwin, "Infused Virtue," 36.

¹¹² Sherwin, "Infused Virtue," 37

¹¹³ Sherwin, "Infused Virtue," 37; Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 193.

¹¹⁴ Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 193.

¹¹⁵ Arielle Harms, "Acquired and Infused Moral Virtue: A Distinction of Ends," *NB* 95 (2014): 71-87.

of the infused virtues is God.¹¹⁶ This difference is easily seen when comparing the paradigm theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity to paradigmatic natural virtues: theological virtues are aimed at God whereas natural virtues are aimed at either the self or others.¹¹⁷ Thus, Thomas's theological framework allows for moral virtues that are acquired through the normal process of habituation.

Jared Brandt offers the second solution by providing a further distinction between acquired virtues and infused virtues: "the infused virtues, unlike the acquired virtues, can be present alongside contrary dispositions."¹¹⁸ As the acquired virtues are habituated they necessarily work against any dispositions that make their characteristic expression and motivation difficult.¹¹⁹ Since the infused virtues are a divine gift they are not habituated by actions that would also remove contrary dispositions. Moreover, Aquinas is concerned to be consistent with one of his theologically organizing claims: "grace does not destroy nature but perfects it."¹²⁰ The infused virtues do not supplant human nature for some other nature but are given to raise up that nature to attain and aim for something that is beyond it while preserving its integrity. As Aquinas says, "Infused virtue is caused in us by God without any action on our part, but not without our consent."¹²¹ According to Craig Boyd, "The idea here is that grace and nature are not diametrically opposed principles locking in mortal combat for ontological supremacy but that there is a complementarity."¹²² Thus, in the infused virtues, God leaves space for the human nature to acquire its "natural" perfections in a way that is commensurate to that nature.

Talbot's struggle with temperance after conversion and baptism, then, is not a problem for a virtue ethic that endorses God's gracious action in human moral character, if the distinctions noted above are part of the ethical framework. In his conversion, God would have infused into Talbot the theological virtues and those moral virtues that have as their object God. Yet, this infusion would not have overridden his contrary dispositions: his standing-dispositional desire to drink alcohol, for example.

¹¹⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, 1-2, Q. 62, Art. 1; cf., Harms, "Acquired and Infused Moral Virtue," 80 and Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology*, 327-30.

¹¹⁷ Brandt, "Growth in Infused Virtue," 80, 83-6.

¹¹⁸ Brandt, "Growth in Infused Virtue," 92.

¹¹⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1-2, Q. 65, Art. 3; see also Brandt, "Growth in Infused Virtue," 93.

¹²⁰ Craig A. Boyd, "Aquinas on Sanctifying the Affections: Participating in the Life of the Spirit," in *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition*, eds., Dale M. Coulter and Amos Yong (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 143.

¹²¹ Aquinas, *ST*, 1-2, Q. 55, Art. 4, ad. 6.

¹²² Boyd, "Aquinas on Sanctifying the Affections," 143.

6.2 Passing the Test: How Infused Virtue does not Rule Out the Possibility of (T) Here is how my argument passes this brief theological test: (i) the theological points condition my argument in an important respect and (ii) with this condition in place, it remains true that the possibility of (T) is necessary for the development of acquired moral virtue. First, if God infuses any virtues, then it must be admitted that those infused virtues do not require the possibility of temptation in order to be had. It can be reasonably argued that God does infuse virtues that have him as their object and therefore require his gracious work in order to aim persons beyond their natural capacities. Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that not all virtues require the possibility of (T) in order to be had. Fortunately, this does not defeat the argument of my project, but only moderates it and does so in a way that is more theologically informed.

Second, there are virtues where the possibility of (T) remains necessary because (i) these virtues are not deposited in human character but are habituated over time, and (ii) God's infusion of some virtues leaves unchanged various other motivations and desires. As it pertains to natural human dispositions, then, it can be argued that God designed both the world and humans to develop virtue through a process of habituation that requires the ability to do evaluative-ranking (as I argue above in sections 5.2 and 5.3). Therefore, if the domain of moral consideration is "innerworldly," and as such is within the realities of human desiring, willing, and reasoning, the process of moral virtue formation requires an environment permissive to temptation. Moreover, the full expression of the infused virtues would also need the possibility of temptation, but only in so far as the infused virtues require connected, contrary dispositions and desires to come into alignment with the infused virtues.

In this section I have argued that my thesis—*if human persons are to develop the moral virtues, then the possibility of temptation is necessary*—passes the theological test posed by Thomas's conception of infused virtue. This section, therefore, contributes to the philosophical coherency of my project by suggesting its further theological coherency.

7 Conciliar Christology & (T)'s Role in Moral Virtue Formation

There is a second theological test that the main thesis needs to pass from Christian tradition: how would this account of (T) cohere with what we know of the person and

work of Jesus Christ?¹²³ This question presses two lines of worry for my argument. First, (a), in order for Jesus to have developed virtue, would he, in fact, need a world that is conducive to (T)—could he not have developed moral virtue in a different world? And second, (b), given that (T) is morally dubious, how could a sinless and impeccable being experience (T)?¹²⁴ How might my project respond to these possible worries?

First, is the possibility of (T) really necessary for Jesus to have developed virtue? An affirmative answer seems to have two serious problems. On the one hand, my argument implies some kind of limitation on Jesus: he could not “grow in wisdom” (Luke 2.52) were it not the case that the world permits of (T).¹²⁵ On the other hand, I have argued that (T) is morally dubious and that any experience of temptation (on (T)) is a morally problematic experience. How, then, does this comport with the traditional Christian commitment to Jesus’s being sinless, especially in light of Hebrews 4.15: “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (ESV).¹²⁶ The second iteration of this objection overlaps with objection (b) from above and will be dealt with next. First, however, does Jesus really need a world conducive to (T) in order to become virtuous? My argument entails an affirmative answer and I do not think that this answer constitutes a serious worry for the coherency of the conclusion for the following reasons. Christian theology is dogmatically committed to notion that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. My argument contends that in so far as being authentically human entails not already being fully virtuous and becoming and being morally virtuous necessarily requires developing and utilizing an “evaluative-ranking” capacity and experiencing (T) also requires a capacity for “evaluative-ranking,” then any authentic human will need a

¹²³ Relatedly, how would the thesis cohere with pre-fall humans: does this account of temptation and moral virtue formation apply to a putative Adam and Eve? This is a less pressing objection than the Christological one and therefore I do not pursue this line of inquiry (considerations of scope also require limitations). That said, I think the account of (T) defended here would apply to an Adam and Eve and, in Hickean-Irenaeian fashion, I hold that the first humans were *immature* and needed to grow in moral virtue and therefore, the argument I defend is not defeated by considerations of pre-fall humans.

¹²⁴ There is debate regarding whether Christ was sinless *and* impeccable (without sin and unable to sin) or whether Christ was simply sinless (without sin but able to sin). For a review of the literature and a defense of the classical view (sinless and impeccable) see Oliver D. Crisp, “Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 72 (2007): 168-86.

¹²⁵ Let us assume for the argument that “wisdom” in Luke’s account is the virtue of prudence.

¹²⁶ For an analytic defense of this traditional view see, Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, Current Issues in Theology, ed. Iain Torrance (New York, CUP, 2007) and Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (New York, OUP, 2016).

world that permits of (T) in order to develop moral virtue.¹²⁷ Thus, if Jesus's humanity is authentic—it is the same nature as all other humans—then Jesus will need a world that is permissive of (T) in order for his human nature to develop the moral virtues.¹²⁸

How can my argument hold coherently that (i) Jesus is both sinless and impeccable—conciliar Christology—that (ii) Jesus requires a world permissive of (T) in order to develop moral virtue and (iii) that (T) is a morally dubious experience and sometimes morally blameworthy? This seems to be an inconsistent set and as such a potential defeater to the main thesis. Above I articulate how (i) and (ii) can cohere: Jesus's being authentically human—having a human nature—requires a world permitting of (T) in order to develop moral virtues due to the nature of moral virtues, humanity, and (T). However, this does not show that any experience of (T) is coherent with Jesus's being sinless and impeccable: how could someone who is sinless and incapable of sinning experience something that is morally dubious and potentially blameworthy? By way of a first response, it is important to note the precise claim my argument makes regarding (T) and blameworthiness. In Chapter 3, section 3.3, I argue that (T) is *sometimes* morally culpable but not always. Thus, it is entirely possible that all of Jesus's experiences of (T) are non-blameworthy. Indeed, given the theological commitment to Jesus's being sinless and incapable of sin, we would be required to believe—in order to be consistent: that Jesus's experiences of (T) are, in fact, non-culpable experiences of (T). So far, then, my thesis coheres with the Christian tradition's view of Jesus's moral character. Yet, the real problem is (T)'s being morally dubious in Jesus's experience. Thus, I now turn to objection (b): given that (T) is morally dubious, how could a sinless and impeccable being experience (T)?

The defense of my argument on this point must be brief due to constraints of space and scope. A fully developed answer requires a much longer treatment and broaches many issues of theological debate in Christology.¹²⁹ All my argument requires

¹²⁷ Notice: commitment to the idea that humans are not already fully virtuous is not the same as being committed to the idea that all humans are necessarily fallen or sinful. Thus, we can hold that Jesus is both sinless *and* less than fully virtuous—because, for example, his moral character is immature.

¹²⁸ This applies to Jesus's human nature only. The divine nature neither develops virtue nor experiences temptation. Because God is necessarily morally perfect and perfectly wise, God cannot develop virtue and God cannot experience temptation. A perfectly good and wise being will neither have desires for bad states of affairs, or bad desires, nor will such a being have false beliefs about his desires; thus, it is impossible for God to experience (T). This argument is adapted from Edward E. Wiernga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 12.

¹²⁹ A forthcoming volume is dedicated to exploring some of the theological and philosophical issues at stake in this seemingly interminable discussion: Johannes Grössl and Klaus von Stosch (eds.),

to pass this theological test at this stage is to show a plausible line of reasoning that is coherent and consistent—that is internally sound and that could logically “hang with” traditional theological commitments (see Chapter 1, section 2.2.3). Pulling together some of the precise commitments of my account of (T) shows a trajectory that is plausible and reasonable. First, I have not claimed that (T) requires a *fallen* nature, only that (T) requires that a TE have a conflicting psychic experience where TE *believes* the conflict involves a desire that is morally worse than some other option (mental state, state of affairs, etc.; see Chapter 3, section 3.3.2).¹³⁰ Thus, for Jesus to experience (T), he need not have a fallen or sinful human nature that actually desires morally bad states of affairs. This means that a sinless or impeccable human could experience (T) since the experience need not involve actual sinful or bad desires (or bad/sinful states of affairs) but only those believed to be bad.¹³¹

Yet, this is not all that I have argued. I have also contended that an experience of (T) is at the same time a loss or failure of moral integrity and as such is morally dubious (Chapter 3, section 1.2.5 and especially 3.3.1). How is it possible for a sinless and impeccable person to experience a loss or failure of moral integrity? At the start we must recognize that there is an important difference between sinlessness/impeccability and moral perfection. To be sinless is simply to be without sin, to be impeccable is to be incapable of sin, and to be morally perfect is to be wholly good, righteous, and virtuous.¹³² A morally perfect being is also perfectly integrous: they are whole-hearted for what is good and experience no breakdown between their first- and second-order desires, which desires are always ordered toward that which is good. Such a being could not experience (T). Importantly, it is theologically and logically plausible to hold that Jesus was not morally perfect (cf. Luke 2.15), even if he was sinless and impeccable. Furthermore, it is possible for a sinless, impeccable person to experience a psychic conflict of the kind

Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ's Divine and Human Will (New York: Routledge, 2021).

¹³⁰ On whether Jesus had a fallen nature see Oliver D. Crisp, “Did Jesus have a *Fallen* Human Nature?” *IJST* 6, no. 3 (July 2004): 270-88.

¹³¹ This is the point that Tom Morris is defending when he argues that Jesus only needs the epistemic possibility of temptation not the metaphysical possibility (see Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986], 147-53; and Chapter 3, section 3.2.2 above).

¹³² Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz, *The Divine Attributes*, Exploring the Philosophy of Religion, ed. Michael L. Peterson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2002), 143-65; Wiernga, *The Nature of God*, 202-212; Laura Garcia, “Moral Perfection,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Michael Rea and Thomas P. Flint (New York: OUP, 2009), 217-38

essential to (T) so long as the initiating desire is not one that is itself (or the states of affair toward which it aims) morally problematic. It is only moral perfection that precludes psychic conflicts that are believed to be bad and someone could be sinless and impeccable while also being morally immature; thus, experiencing just the kinds of conflicts necessary for (T). If this is theologically plausible, then it is possible that Jesus, qua human, experienced (T). Put differently, (T) only requires a kind of moral immaturity, not a fallen or sinful nature, not actual sin, and therefore is not incoherent when applied to the divine-human Jesus. This shows that my argument remains plausible in light of conciliar Christology and therefore passes this second theological test.

8 Conclusion

This chapter has brought the various components developed in the previous chapter together in order to argue for the thesis of the project. In this chapter I have argued that the possibility of experiencing (T) is a necessary condition for the formation of virtue. The majority foundation for this was given in Chapters 3 and 4 where I argued for an analytically precise conception of temptation. Furthermore, this conclusion is built upon central notions in neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics: (i) human nature determines the process of virtue formation, (ii) virtue per se is conditioned by its formation process, (iii) virtues are habits that necessarily include right actions, motivations, affections, and judgement, (iv) the motivational dimension of virtue connects to the motivational dimension of (T), (v) temptation necessarily involves evaluative-ranking, and (vi) virtue formation requires evaluative-ranking. With the argument concluded, I then tested its theological coherency by interfacing it with a possible line of objection from the Thomistic idea of infused virtues. The result of that test was two-fold. First, a concession: infused virtues do not require an environment where temptation is possible. This explains why in the project thesis and throughout I have conditioned the scope of virtue formation to “moral virtue” in order to signal that theological virtues, or infused virtues, are not included in the thesis. Second, the thesis statement passed the test by displaying its capacity to cohere with important theological commitments. The next and final chapter concludes the project with a brief summary of the core arguments and a consideration of further philosophical and theological avenues of study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Summary of the Argument and Avenues of Future Study

1 Summary of the Argument and Statement of Contribution

The argument of this project provides an original contribution to the relatively new field of analytic moral theology. A central goal that guides this approach to ethical reflection is to discern how far and wide our epistemology can carry us in gaining knowledge about moral reality. Various sources circumscribe the scope of this goal: Christian scriptures, Christian tradition, and analytic philosophy. Moreover, analytic moral theology is methodologically committed to argumentative rigor and precision, consistency, and coherency. My argument has been motivated by the ambitions of analytic philosophy, as informed and normed by the authoritative sourcing of moral theology, thus displaying the methodology of analytic moral theology. In this sense, analytic moral theology takes a biblical-theological moral notion or commitment and develops a robust and rigorous analytic conception of it that is informed by pertinent philosophical considerations. My argument here has arrived at this result first, with its exposition of the nature of temptation and, then, by applying that account of (T) to the nature of moral virtue development according to a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethic.

Paralleling John Hick's and Michael Brady's arguments that the world needs to be such that suffering is possible in order for character formation to occur, I have argued that in order for human agents to develop the moral virtues, the world needs to be such that temptation is possible. In the mode of analytic philosophy, this argument began by breaking down the larger claim into smaller parts with a critical analysis of the relevant philosophical and theological sources on the nature of temptation in Chapter 2. That chapter concluded with a look to the biblical data, which data would set the basic parameters for the subsequent analytic conception of (T) in Chapter 3: namely, that temptation is subjective; it essentially involves desire, and that temptation is morally problematic. The third chapter articulated and defended a precise analytic definition of (T). Following the methods of analytic moral philosophy, the necessary conditions entailed in the analytic definition were extracted, examined, and defended. While guided by the grounding data provided by the scriptural data, I argued for consistency and coherency in the necessary conditions for (T). This argument gave robustness to the

necessary conditions by being informed by philosophical moral psychology and philosophy of action. Chapter 3, then, established and defended (T) as an original, substantial contribution to moral theology. Moreover, Chapter 3 brought needed precision to the project thesis by explicating precisely what “temptation” is. Building on this constructive argument, Chapter 4 gave further clarity and location to (T) in the larger body of moral philosophy. There I argued that, although often used equivocally, temptation and *akrasia* or weakness of will are different but related concepts. Chiefly, I established that the state of experiencing (T) is neither *akrasia* nor weakness of will but that temptation succumbed-to can be either *akrasia* or weakness of will, or both. This line of argument did not merely further clarify (T) but also importantly differentiated (T) from moral phenomena already discussed in literature on virtue formation. Moreover, that argument was also an original, substantial contribution to the literature on *akrasia*/weakness of will. Owing to the philosophical discussion of *akrasia*, weakness of will and moral responsibility, in Chapter 4 I also argued that (T) is sometimes morally blameworthy but not always. This argument served a two-pronged purpose: (i) it gave substance to the claim that my argument pattern mirrors that of Hick’s and Brady’s, namely that it is possible for something bad to be necessary for virtue formation; and, (ii), this argument gave philosophical robustness to the biblical-theological notion that temptation is morally problematic. With the arguments of Chapter 2 through 4 in place, the set-up was in place for Chapter 5 and the final argument. I argued in Chapter 5 for the conclusion that human agents need a world that is permissible of (T) in order to develop moral virtues. Chiefly this argument rested on the interface between (T) and virtue at the point of rational desire and evaluative ranking. Since both virtue and (T) require the ability to engage in evaluative ranking, and humans are not already virtuous, it follows that in order to develop virtue, humans need a world that is conducive to developing the ability to evaluatively rank their desires. Thus, in order to develop virtue, humans need a world where (T) is possible.

Throughout the various parts of the project’s argument, many incidental and subsidiary concerns were necessarily cast aside and much fertile ground for further exploration was ignored. This project opens space for much subsequent philosophical and theological exploration. In the next and final section, I note a handful of areas that this study makes fruitful for further analysis.

2 Avenues of Future Study

The arguments of this project are original, substantial contributions to moral theology and philosophy and as such provide ample fountainheads for streams of further research and exploration. The final word on (T) is far from being said in this project. There are many rich opportunities for careful theological and philosophical reflection on experiences of temptation.

2.1 (T) and Systematic Theology

There are two immediate areas in systematic theology that are ripe for further analysis. First, my study in Chapter 4 invites further investigation of the relation between (T) and sin. That (T) is morally problematic is grounded in the scriptural witness (as noted in Chapter 2 and 3), but is (T) ever sinful? Analytic moral theology has the tools to pursue a robust and coherent answer to this question. Related to sin and (T) is the problem of Jesus's temptation. Various theologians and philosophers have attempted to articulate solutions to this problem. Perhaps the account of (T) that I defend here can prove insightful to this conversation.

2.2 (T) and the Virtues of Temperance and Wisdom

I have argued that the conception of temptation I construct has a natural home in virtue ethics. Building on this, there is a readily available investigation that explores the role that (T) could have in the development of specific virtues. For example, I can see a conceptual connection between my argument in this project and a step further that argues that (T) is necessary for the development of both self-control/temperance and practical wisdom/*phronesis*. The sources in both moral theology and philosophy provide abundant resources for an argument along these lines.

2.3 (T) and Thomistic Philosophy of Action

An inviting avenue of exploration is a fine-grained exploration of Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of action and temptation. Thomas's conception of human action, especially in his discussions of continence, incontinence, moral weakness and ignorance, are profoundly complex and nuanced such that he might offer both clarification and potential correction to the foregoing account of (T).

2.4 (T) and Epistemic Temptation

In the recent literature on *akrasia* there has developed a interesting line of inquiry called “epistemic *akrasia*.” According to David Owens, the epistemically akratic person is one who believes something that they think they ought not believe; like the akratic person, so the analogy goes, an individual does something that they think they ought not do.¹ The epistemic off-shoot from moral philosophy and action theory could suggest a similar epistemic off-shoot for temptation. In this line of thought, epistemic temptation could be the experience of wanting to believe something that one also believes to be untrue or unjustified. If *akrasia* and weakness of will are related to (T), then perhaps too epistemic *akrasia* is related to epistemic-(T).

2.5 (T) and Social Science Research

I noted in Chapter 2 that there is much empirical research on temptation but that none of that research conceptualizes temptation more robustly than the standard dictionary definition. Therefore, there is potential for fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue between social science research on temptation and the account of (T) that I have defended here. It may be that (T) is both philosophically coherent and also matches the live phenomenological research on human agents. Or, indeed, it may be that such research can added needed corrective nuance to the argument I defend. In either case, there is great potential for cross-disciplinary study.

¹ Owens is not the first to wrestle with this question, but he is the first to label it epistemic *akrasia*, see David Owens, “Epistemic *Akrasia*,” *The Monist* 85, no. 3 [2002]: 381-97.

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