

Introduction

It is widely accepted that character is not innate but created, and that one is destined to take authorship of his/her character. However, is it not true that one has already had a character before one is mature enough to take responsibility for it? If so, how can one be held responsible for one's character? This doubt is expressed as follows (Kupperman, 1991, p. 48):

If people typically have developed character before they are in a position to make mature, reflective decisions about what they want them to be, are they responsible for their characters?

Since habituation is indispensable to the formation of moral character, and since it is largely directed by people other than the moral agent, it is doubtful whether an individual's character is really voluntarily constructed. Put differently, if the enterprise of character construction is mainly out of one's control, how can one be held responsible for it? For that matter, character development seems incompatible with the notion of moral responsibility (Brickhouse, 1991, pp. 137, 143). Moreover, when other non-voluntary factors which more or less exert influence on the development of character are taken into account, such as one's background, circumstances, upbringing, temperament and the like (Jacob, 2001, p. 11), this misgiving is intensified. In the main, the aforementioned variables can be placed under the general heading of "moral luck," which falls on the agent without his/her consent. To sum up, "since our character has a history that begins with things that merely happened to us," the question arises, "how could we come to be responsible for our character, having begun with no responsibility at all (Russell, 2009, pp. 381, 386)?"

This paper was aimed to draw on the idea of "moral luck" to highlight the fact that some non-voluntary factors are unavoidably involved in the construction of character.

Character building, for instance, is conditioned by temperament and upbringing of necessity. However, the extant discourse on the construction of moral character, for the most part, lays emphasis on one's agency and responsibility for it at the expense of these inescapable influences which are out of one's control. The case will be made that moral luck helps to clarify the notion of responsibility for character. For one thing, the construction of character is not completely within the agent's control, nor is it unrestricted by any conditions. For another, it cannot be solely accomplished by the agent, but is rather a collaborative enterprise by nature. Despite these caveats, one is not deprived of responsibility for one's character. To argue for this, an Aristotelian developmental conception of voluntariness and responsibility will be elaborated to specify how one can take on the responsibility for one's character.

Moral luck and its challenge to moral responsibility

The popular belief that one is the author of his/her character may give a false impression that character can be constructed as whatever one wants it to be, and is entirely within one's control. This ignores the important fact that "no one can be wholly responsible for their character in the sense that they build it up from nothing (McKinnon, 1999, p. 75)." In fact, the development of character is necessarily conditioned by some provisions. As indicated by Glover's metaphor, "self-creation is... more like building a medieval town than a planned garden city (Kupperman, 1991, p. 55)." Given this, Trianosky (1993, p. 104) remarks that any realistic account of the nature and origin of character has to accept the conclusion:

Character is the product not only of voluntary action but also of the activity of temperament, along with upbringing, childhood experiences, social environment, peer expectations, and pure happenstance.

Articulating the influence that moral luck exerts on shaping character can act as a useful counterforce to the exaggerated view that character is fully under the control