

Preface

A perennial problem in the theory of human action and agency is how best to understand self-control, how we should describe the processes that constitute self-directed or self-governed behavior. Theorists sometimes say that we can understand self-control best if we understand its failure or absence and then compare and contrast its presence with its absence. Addictive behaviors are often assumed to be prototypical instances of behaviors that are not truly self-controlled and in which self-governance is absent. People may say, "I wasn't really in control when I gambled or took drugs." "I was addicted." "I could not help myself." Is there any validity in that manner of speech? Are we responsible for our addictions? Do we somehow make and direct them? If not, why or when not?

In 2007 we began thinking that this would be a good set of questions to pursue in a special session or colloquium of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SPP) at its annual meeting in 2008. The SPP is a robustly interdisciplinary group, and with the right mix of participants we believed that it would offer a stimulating venue. We proposed such a colloquium to the program chair. A colloquium on the eventual topic of this book then took place, under our direction, at the University of Pennsylvania, where the Society met in 2008. The participants were to include George Ainslie, Louis Charland, Owen Flanagan, and Nancy Petry. Louis and Nancy were (at the last minute) unable to attend, although their presentations were complete. So the two of us substituted for them. When the lively session was complete, we thought "This would make a good topic for a collection with the MIT Press." We proposed it to Tom Stone, who then was philosophy editor for the Press. The project had Tom's immediate and enthusiastic endorsement, for which we are grateful. The current book began to take shape.

We asked the invited participants for the session to publish versions of their papers in the book. We also wanted representation from several additional key theorists. Inviting all those who appear here went remarkably well. The questions raised and discussed in this book struck a responsive chord with everyone who was invited to participate and met with continued enthusiastic support from the Press. At the Press the project was welcomed by Phil Laughlin, Marc Lowenthal, and Gita Manaktala. We are appreciative of the support of both the Press and the SPP. We also wish to express our gratitude to the RISD Liberal Arts Humanities Fund for generous support for the creation of the index, and to Tracy Yonemoto for creating it.

There is no special way in which to read a book like this. One can browse through it. One can, we hope, teach from it. One can identify certain papers as potentially contributory to one's own research. One can learn from it. One does not have to be an academic or mental health or legal professional to read the book. Students in different disciplines and at different university or professional educational levels should be able to read the contributions.

We have ordered or arranged the contributions in a manner that we find helpful in thinking about addiction and responsibility, and this is discussed in our introduction. There is nothing inescapably linear in this ordering, however, and no single topic that is the subject of both an evolving and sharpening focus. It is a book with multiple subjects, diverse perspectives, and contributions from several distinct fields.

Each of us has written elsewhere on some of its topics. But this book is not about our own personal work. It is about new work of others. Except for some stage setting in our introduction, the authors speak for themselves.