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ARISTOTLE'S STEPS TO VIRTUE

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ABSTRACT

How to become morally virtuous? Among the students of Aristotle, it is often assumed that the philosopher does not have a fully worked-out theoretical answer to this question. Some interpreters (e.g. Burnyeat 1980, most recently Curzer 2012) have, however, recognised that Aristotle may have a comprehensive theory of moral development. However, even those interpreters have made only scarce attempts to study Aristotle's theory in connection with the questions about his moral psychology. Unlike Aristotle's theory of moral development as such, several of those questions are among the most debated issues in current Aristotle scholarship—for example, whether we need reason to identify good actions or whether habituated non-rational affects suffice; what makes us responsible for our actions, and how the philosopher conceives the relationship between *phronesis* and moral motivation. In my thesis, I aim at connecting these important questions with Aristotle's theory of moral development. I hope to show that this approach will yield a picture on which Aristotle's theory is divisible into two steps that one has to choose to take in order to become morally virtuous. I argue first that identifying good ends, and actions, requires reason. In order to become morally responsible, a person has thus to develop a rational ability to identify good actions. I show that Aristotle's term for such ability is *synesis*. The first step to virtue, I conclude, is to use this ability well, to choose to become virtuous and habituate one's character into acting well. The second step is to acquire *phronesis*, understanding why good actions are good, to complement a habituated character. Developing of *phronesis* requires both considerable experience in acting well and philosophical teaching about ethics, but it is necessary for moral virtue. Although a finely-habituated person is invulnerable to *akrasia* with regard to pleasures even if he did not have *phronesis*, Aristotle allows, I show, that he might still be prone to impetuous *akrasia*, whereas *phronimos* could avoid akratic behaviour in any situation.

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INTRODUCTION

We study ethics not so that we may know what virtue is,
but so that we may become good.¹

How to become morally virtuous according to Aristotle? This is often taken to be a question to which he does not have a fully worked-out theoretical answer, in spite of declaring that becoming good is what we study ethics for.² The merits of his practical considerations about character development in *Nicomachean Ethics* are, however, widely acknowledged: for example, the centrality of habituation and the emphasis on virtue instead of rules.³ Education theorists and psychologists have recently elevated these and many other Aristotelian topics to the forefront of their research, but often without a profound interest in studying if the philosopher had a worked out theory of character development, or, only a collection of views they can shape into a theory.

There are, however, some contemporary interpreters who have recognised that Aristotle might have a worked-out philosophical theory of the development of virtue, which connects moral development with the development of the ‘rational’ and ‘non-rational aspects’ of the soul—concepts that are not used by contemporary education theorists and psychologists. The first of these interpreters was Myles Burnyeat in the 1980s.⁴ His interpretation has since become the standard answer to the question, only further specified by latter interpreters.⁵ Only recently has Howard Curzer challenged

¹ *EN* 2.2 1103b28–9. Translated by Ross 1923. In the footnotes of my thesis, Ross is abbreviated as (R) and another translation of *EN* that I use, Bartlett and Collins 2009, as (B&C). If the translation is my own, there is no abbreviation. Whether I quote from (R) or (B&C) or use my own translation is determined partly by the accuracy and readability of translations, and partly by terminological consistency, i.e. so that the translations for key terms such as *phronesis* (moral understanding), *logos* (reason) or *prohairesis* (choice or rational choice) stay similar across quotations.

² E.g. Kristjánsson 2013 concludes his survey article (p. 64): ‘Aristotle’s corpus is teeming with ideas on how to achieve [virtue] ... [but] those ideas are not co-ordinated or synchronized into a systematic [...] methodology.’ Sherman 1997 (p. 88) calls Aristotelians to construct such a theory on the philosopher’s behalf: ‘The absence of explicit discussion in [Aristotle’s] ethical treatises of the idea of character development ... does not mean there isn’t room for such a story in a more worked-out version of his view.’ I will argue, however, that Aristotle *has* a worked-out theory of character development. We do not have to aim at expanding and improve his views, but only recovering them.

³ E.g. Kristjánsson 2013, and Lapsley and Narvaez 2006, Ch. 1.

⁴ Burnyeat 1980.

⁵ E.g. Sherman 1991, p 158, admits that her aim is to only expand Burnyeat’s interpretation. Also e.g. Nussbaum (1989), Reeve (1992), pp. 51-4, Whiting (2002), p. 173, Lorenz (2009), p. 190, and Moss (2012), p. 37, offer interpretations very similar to it.

this interpretation.⁶ However, neither of these interpretations answers the question in a very thorough way. Neither addresses the much-debated issue of whether we need to use our reason to discern good ends or not, although this problem is of paramount importance to both interpreters since their interpretations presuppose an affirmative answer to it. Moreover neither Burnyeat nor Curzer study how their conclusions, if correct, would affect the way we should interpret two further issues that are closely related to moral development: how we become responsible for our actions according to Aristotle, and how reason, if it can affect to our moral motivation, can affect to it.

In my thesis, I aim to show that provided that we study Aristotle's account of moral development while bearing in mind its connections to the above key questions about his moral psychology, we shall come to a more thorough and philosophically promising theory of moral development that neither Burnyeat nor Curzer have discovered.⁷ I also believe that this approach might yield a novel understanding of the reasons why Aristotle regards us as responsible for our characters, and of how he conceives the relationship between the development of the rational aspect of our soul, the habituation of our desires, and the improvement of our moral motivation.

Aristotle thinks that our becoming morally virtuous must start from our natural virtue—our desire to act well.⁸ Everyone has it by birth, but this foundational motivation—I aim to have shown by the end of the four chapters of my thesis—has to first be complemented by an ability to rationally identify which actions are good, then by the habit of acting well, and finally by understanding why certain actions are good. Virtually everyone is expected to be able identify good actions (*praxeis*), and we all have the potential to direct our natural virtue at the right ends and to choose to act well or not. This makes us responsible for our actions and capable of choosing to take steps to becoming virtuous. Since all, even bad people, undergo this development, it is, however, not yet a step towards virtue. I propose that habituation

⁶ Curzer 2002 and 2012.

⁷ The principal sources of my interpretation is *EN*, and to lesser extent *De Anima*. I do not use *EE* in the same extent as *EN*, because Aristotle does not discuss as much about moral and cognitive development in that work and whenever he discusses, his claims are often similar to those in *EN*. Whenever I find that he says something that either differs from, or adds to, *EN* in *EE*, I mention it.

⁸ See the beginning of *EN* 6.13 1144b3–8 (quoted on p. 50 below), in which Aristotle states that we have an inclination to be virtuous by nature—natural virtue—even before we know what is good.

(*ethismos*) to using our natural potential properly, for acting well, is the first step to becoming morally virtuous.⁹ During this step, natural virtue becomes capable of resisting contrary, non-rational desires. The second step to virtue, I argue, is when virtue becomes the sole motive of our actions. I attempt to show that only acquiring an understanding of why certain actions are good, and ability to deliberate on the basis of it (*phronesis*), can make a finely-habituated (*epieikes*) person invulnerable to *akrasia*—conscious acting against the human good. For not all akratic conduct is due to bad non-rational desires, but also impetuosity can result it. The state of habituated character that is impervious to both types of *akrasia*, I conclude, is moral virtue.¹⁰

I begin Chapter 1 of my thesis by discussing whether Aristotle thinks that we need thinking (*nous*) to identify good ends—that is, good actions. For according to Aristotle, good actions should be considered ends in themselves,¹¹ and thus good ends and actions are ultimately synonymous for him. I will defend the established interpretation that a person needs to think (*noein*) in order to identify good actions, that is, to use *nous*, and not only to rely on habit.¹² A significant minority of interpreters have however, traditionally argued that we do not need *nous* to identify good ends.¹³ These anti-rationalist interpreters tend to take *EN* 2.1, in which Aristotle says that moral virtue, unlike the virtue of thought, results from habit, and his statements in *EN* 3.5 that we do not deliberate about the ends of our desires, to show that this is the case. Instead, the ends of our desire improve only through habituating our desire for pleasure—which does not result from deliberation—to acting well. Although good acting is not often immediately pleasant, a child can be habituated to

⁹ Although my thesis is not primarily about the pedagogical content of Aristotelian *ethismos*, I will attempt to unpack some that content during my thesis, especially in the course of Ch. 2. I can warn, however, already that this concept, just as e.g. *phronesis*, evades any precise definition: it consists of acting, thinking, imitating, learning from mistakes, being punished and rewarded, etc., in brief, of whatever it takes for a person to come to act well. See Sherman 1989 Ch. 5 for more discussion.

¹⁰ One may think that *akrasia* (with *enkrateia*) is the end-state of character development just as virtue. However, in *EN* 10.9 1180a1-4, Aristotle says that the law and custom (*nomos*) habituates grown men further, which implies that not all moral development has to take place in youth, which implies further that even the grown up akratic can hope to become better by observing *nomoi*. According to Aristotle (1180a15-25) *nomoi* mix reasoning and compulsion, stimulating people to act rationally.

¹¹ Aristotle states that a virtuous person performs good actions for their intrinsic nobility (*to kalon*) in *EN* 2.4 1105a29–b5 and *EN* 4.1 1120a23–4 (See footnote 44 on p. 22 below for more analysis). This reflects his view about the equivocality of acting well and human good in *EN* 1.4 1095a19–20.

¹² E.g. Cooper 1975, Dahl 1984, and Irwin 2007 support this interpretation.

¹³ E.g. Walter 1874, Zeller 1896, Aubenque 1965, and recently Moss 2011.

associate good actions with pleasant experiences, and eventually such conditioning will enable him to discern good actions through the pleasure that ensues from anticipating them. Therefore discerning good actions may not require *nous*. On the anti-rationalist interpretation, *pace* my rationalist interpretation, rational ability to identify good actions is not a prerequisite for developing the habit of acting well.

The reason why the anti-rationalist interpretation has, however, only ever been endorsed by a small minority of interpreters, is probably that in *EN* 1.13, Aristotle divides the human soul into rational (*dianoetikon*) and non-rational (*orektikon*) aspects. He seems to say that the rational aspect desires good ends, while the non-rational aspect characteristically desires pleasure, thus differentiating the cognition of value from the sensation of pleasure. Moreover, in *EN* 6.13, the philosopher claims that one can be morally virtuous if and only if one has developed practical reason (*phronesis*): this would be a redundant claim if he thought that *nous* (which is constitutive of any rational activity) is neither needed for acting well nor discerning good ends. I cannot rely, however, solely on this standard defence any more. For Jessica Moss has recently attempted to rescue the non-rationalist interpretation by arguing that even if the above, rationalist reading of *EN* 1.13 was entirely right, it might nevertheless be that we discern value non-rationally according to Aristotle.

According to Moss, some of Aristotle's claims in *De Anima* 3 show that cognising value belongs to the non-rational faculty of *phantasia*. One might therefore not need to rationally identify that an action is good so as to perceive it as good, but only receive the appearance of its goodness with *phantasia*, that is, claims Moss, imagine the action as pleasant. The task of the rational aspect of soul in moral cognition might be to only conceptualise those appearances: to enable a well-habituated person to associate pleasurable mental images with word 'good'. Hence Aristotle's views in *EN* 1.13 and *EN* 6.13 may not imply that identifying good ends requires any *nous*.

I think, however, that Moss' interpretation is probably mistaken. I will present several considerations that lead to this conclusion. Probably the most important of these is that his interpretation cannot explain why Aristotle seems to think, in *EN* 3.5, that one's becoming responsible for one's actions presupposes a rational choice (*prohairesis*) regarding the direction of habituation, that is, whether one wants to

follow a virtuous example in one's acting or not, made before one has engaged in following any example as long as one has acquired a certain moral character. For if identifying good ends did not depend upon *nous*, but was determined by how much enjoyment one received from non-rationally imagining various ends, as Moss argues, there would be no point in young people trying to *rationaly* (i.e. with *nous*) choose whether to become virtuous or not. Their choice would be determined by their non-rational *phantasia*. Therefore they would not be responsible for their actions either.

Provided we grant, then, on the basis of above, and two other considerations that I will present in Chapter 1, that we need *nous* to identify good actions, it would follow that thinking (*dianoia*) is also needed for the exercise of moral virtue. But why, then, does Aristotle say in *EN* 2.1 that moral virtue (*ethike arête*) is a matter of habituation, unlike the virtue of thought (*dianoetike arête*)? I shall deal with this question in Chapter 2. One reason for this claim might be that identifying good actions could require thinking, whereas the motivation to perform them comes exclusively from habituation—and Aristotle's concept of 'moral virtue' may refer only to this latter component. However, the answer is not so simple, because in *EN* 1.4, Aristotle goes on to imply that habituation suffices to give one the ability to identify which actions are good. Therefore the motivational and intellectual components of moral virtue seem to be developmentally inseparable, which may make Aristotle's position seem strange. For habituation to performing certain actions does not seem to bear any relation to enabling one to identify good actions by *nous* instead of by only routine.

However, Aristotle also says in *EN* 2.1 that moral habituation requires a teacher, and this may be taken to indicate, as Burnyeat has argued, that since the purpose of moral habituation is not only to train people's (presumably children's) non-rational desires, but it involves also the development of thinking insofar as we need it to identify good actions, someone (presumably a parent) is needed to teach them good actions.¹⁴ The non-rational desire of pleasure motivates children to act as they are taught to act, because performing good action naturally produces pleasure for them. I will argue, however, that Burnyeat's interpretation is probably mistaken. One reason for my suspicion is that, according to *EN* 1.4 and 10.9, people can be receptive to

¹⁴ Burnyeat 1980.

moral instruction only if they already have good habits. Therefore it would be quite useless to employ a teacher to instruct unhabituated people about good actions.

To avoid this problem with Burnyeat's interpretation, I will argue, following Curzer,¹⁵ that the moral teacher might not need to teach good actions to a moral student, but only punish and reproach him for bad actions, so that he may then learn good actions on his own. The punishments that ensue from acting badly can develop a sense of shame in the student, motivating him to avoid acting badly. Nevertheless, neither can Curzer's interpretation avoid a problem with Aristotle's account of moral responsibility. Both interpreters seem to think that we acquire our moral character through obediently following guidance that is provided to us from outside, either through punishments or teaching. This conclusion makes it seem mysterious how we could acquire the ability to choose which kind of behaviour to engage in before our moral character is determined—which what Aristotle regards as the condition for moral responsibility in *EN* 3.5. However, Curzer's interpretation has space for avoiding this problem, unlike Burnyeat's. Being instructed which actions to perform, and then ensuring that we perform them would take away any genuine opportunity to choose them, whereas avoiding bad actions is not yet choosing to perform good actions according to Aristotle. Curzer does not, however, give any interpretation of how he thinks we can come to identify good actions. Therefore it remains possible to argue that perhaps one could learn to identify good actions by his own means, without coming to learn everything about them through a teacher's instruction.

After these conclusions, I will argue that Aristotle thinks that engaging in a normal social life will inevitably actualise the cognitive ability of *synesis*—the ability to correctly identify (*krinein*) good actions on the basis of other people's opinions (*EN* 6.10)—in a person. By enabling people to identify good actions without habituation, *synesis*, while not presupposing that people are actually motivated to follow its guidance, enables them to identify good actions by considering what other people would think is good to do. Therefore *synesis* might be a basis for Aristotle's

¹⁵ Curzer 2002 and 2012.

account of moral responsibility, for his view is that we must choose to which kinds of actions we habituate ourselves before we gain the habits of acting in certain ways.

In Chapter 3, I first describe the operation of *synesis* in identifying good actions, and after that turn to the last step in moral development: the move from being a good, habitually well-acting person to the acquisition of *phronesis* and full moral virtue. With regard to the first topic, one may easily wonder how *synesis* can operate as I have characterised it above: given that different actions are good in different situations for different reasons, how does Aristotle think that someone could reliably identify a good action without being able to understand what makes certain actions good here and now? This is a question that supporters of the interpretation that only *phronesis* can identify good actions may pose.¹⁶ I will show, however, that Aristotle had resources for answering this question, although he nowhere explicitly answers it. Since the philosopher claims in *Posterior Analytics* that all knowledge, including moral knowledge, is acquired in the same way, by asking *to dioti* for *to hoti*, we could seek an applicable answer from David Charles' seminal interpretation of Aristotle's theory of coming to identify natural kinds.¹⁷ In his interpretation, Charles concludes that if we are uncertain about whether something is, e.g., gold, we can consult a master goldsmith to the grasp of *to hoti*. Whether he identifies that material as gold or not can be our epistemic basis for regarding it as gold or not, instead of having any reasoned premises to explain why it is gold. If people can reliably identify that something is gold only by consulting master craftsmen's opinions, they should also be able to identify good actions by consulting opinions about good actions. In this case, we would need to assume that identifying good actions requires *phronesis*, which provides us with a understanding why those actions are good.

This is how *synesis* may serve as a stepping-stone in a life that eventually acquires *phronesis*, and full virtue, by enabling one to rationally choose how to habituate one's character—badly or well. In the second half of Chapter 3, I shall study further how *phronesis* is acquired to complement *synesis*. We shall have established already in Chapter 2 that a person who has *to hoti*, who is competent in identifying good

¹⁶ E.g. Vasilioiu 1996, McDowell 2007, and Angier 2010.

¹⁷ Charles 2000.

actions, is presumably virtuous once he has also acquired *to dioti*, an understanding of why certain actions are good, which have to go together in order to constitute the virtue of *phronesis*. In *EN* 1.4, Aristotle can be read as proposing that attending lectures on ethics may allow a well-habituated possessor of *synesis* to come know *to dioti*, at least at a theoretical level, which, as he argues by approvingly quoting Hesiod, helps to make him ‘the best’.¹⁸ To be the morally best, however, a person does not only need to know *to dioti* on a theoretical level—e.g. to memorise the proposition that acting well realises *eudaimonia*—but also needs to display his knowledge in his actions. Although *phronesis* is a virtue of thought, it is primarily a virtue of practical, action-related rather than theoretical thought.

Phronesis may come, I will propose, from learning that *eudaimonia*, the human good, is to act well by listening lectures in ethics, and simultaneously letting moral experience gradually build a disposition to act well for the sake of *eudaimonia*. As Aristotle puts it at *EN* 6.13, this is to act well with the involvement of right reason (*meta ton orthon logon*) as opposed to acting only in accordance (*kata*) with it, acting well because of some other reasons. Once one has learned that one should act well so as to realise the human good and satisfy one’s natural desire for the good, and then returns to one’s everyday life, consciously experiencing that acting well indeed makes one happy, one’s motivation to act well shall increase. Thus, one will be eager to study yet more about the human good—for example, about its relation to human nature as rational animal, about the importance of contemplation for good life, *etc.*—which, in turn, enrich one’s experience, thus motivating one to study more. The efficiency of such a virtuous circle of learning in developing understanding why certain actions are good, and thus also excellent deliberation, in brief, *phronesis*, that implies moral virtue, the state in which one constantly reaches the right decisions to act on the basis of right premises, might be why Aristotle thinks that *phronesis* is acquired by both teaching and experience to complement finely-habituated character.

¹⁸I shall use only masculine gender, because the terminology that refers to moral development (*synetos*, *phronimos*, *agathos* etc.) is exclusively masculine in Ancient Greek. Aristotle does not consider women capable of becoming *phronimoi*, as according to him, their deliberative faculty (*to bouleutikon*) is not sovereign (*autarkon*) (*Pol.* 1.13 1260a10-14), or, capable of rational choice.

By the end of Chapter 3, we should thus have come to see how a finely-habituated person could acquire moral virtue. Since he acts habitually well, however, even *before* he is virtuous, it remains to be explained why moral virtue is the end of moral development in Aristotle. Provided that moral virtue, that is, finely habituated character plus *phronesis*, does not make any tangible difference to one's acting, but only enables one to act well from the right reason—it may seem that what I call moral virtue is in fact only a virtue of thought that complements morally good character, and nothing 'moral'—i.e. something that brings improvement in our acting—as such. Hence my interpretation may seem incoherent. I will address this worry, however, in Chapter 4, and argue that besides its intellectual benefits, only the combination of finely habituated character and *phronesis* can make one invulnerable to *any* form of *akrasia*, and therefore it merits the name of moral virtue. I think that Aristotle's discussion of the motivational problems of those who lack *phronesis* in *EN* 7 shall make this clear. In that book, interpreting which is the focus of Chapter 4, Aristotle seems to think that all such people, regardless of how finely-habituated their desires, can be vulnerable to acting against their own rational choice (*akrasia*) in certain conditions, while only morally virtuous people are always invulnerable.

I think that Aristotle would admit that people who can accurately and attentively identify particular good actions could still simultaneously experience bad actions as (more) pleasant. I will thus first argue—*pace* Sarah Broadie—that *akrasia* does not have to involve *any* ignorance of particulars.¹⁹ An akratic person's *synesis* can be fully operational, but, as Charles has argued, he may only lack confidence in performing the good action due to defective moral habituation of non-rational desires.²⁰ If a person who can accurately identify good actions habitually succumbs to bad desires, he is akratic; if not, he is, enkratic. There is, however, no reason why even people who, unlike the enkratic, have finely habituated non-rational desires, could not be vulnerable to occasionally surrendering to *other* bad, non-rational impulses, such as to anger (*thymos*). Since *synesis* plus fine moral habituation cannot thus necessarily prevent all varieties of akratic acting, I will suggest, and argue, that

¹⁹ Broadie 1991.

²⁰ Charles 2006 and 2009.

perhaps only the addition of the virtue of *phronesis* could make a finely-habituated person invulnerable to akratic actions in any situation, even when he is very angry.

The last lines of *EN* 7.3, in which Aristotle purports to show how *akrasia* is possible by concluding ‘it is not when proper knowledge (*kyria episteme*) is present when *akrasia* occurs’, show, I think, that this is the philosopher’s view. So far, many interpreters have argued that here ‘proper knowledge’ refers to the akratic’s grasp of correct moral opinions, and perceptual knowledge to his discernment of their relevance to his particular situation; and that the akratic’s bad desire prevents him from using those beliefs.²¹ I will argue, however, that it is implausible to assume that Aristotle would call true moral opinions as *kyria episteme*—which is unchangeable by definition—since even true our moral opinions need to be revised from time to time. I will therefore suggest that the term ‘proper knowledge’ might refer specifically to the understanding why certain actions are good—ultimately, because they realise *eudaimonia*—which is probably the only moral belief that never needs revision. Since *phronesis* implies the complete possession of this understanding, in the presence of which *akrasia*, as Aristotle claimed, cannot occur, the philosopher’s conclusion seems to show that only *phronesis* can prevent all varieties of *akrasia*, even the anger-related, impetuous kind. This is the difference that acquiring *phronesis* to complement fine habits, that is, moral virtue, can make to one’s acting.

In the conclusion of my thesis, I hope to be able to give Aristotle’s answer to the question of how to become morally virtuous—namely by becoming able to identify good actions, then habituating character, and finally by acquiring *phronesis* through study and experience. The first step in one’s moral development is to come to see how parents’ preventive habituation relates to the opinions of other people, thus acquiring *synesis*—the ability to identify good actions. With *synesis*, one may reliably identify good actions, without thereby having knowledge as to why they are good. Acquisition of *synesis* allows the moral learner, who is now about to step from childhood into youth, to become responsible for his character. He can rationally choose whether to act well or not—a choice that shall determine his adult character.

²¹ See e.g. Dahl 1980, Destreé 2006, Irwin 2007, and Charles 2009.

If the student chooses well, his character becomes good. This is the ground for developing moral virtue, which comes as a result of acquiring *phronesis* to complement the already finely-habituated character. The aim of *phronesis* is to provide an identification of *synesis* with an understanding of why certain actions are good: on account of realising *eudaimonia*. Since *phronesis* requires not only learning facts good actions and the nature of *eudaimonia*, but also experience in acting, developing it takes both education and experience. Aristotle considers acquiring *phronesis*—the step from having a finely-habituated character to attaining moral virtue—as the final step in moral development, because only *phronesis* can guarantee that an agent is not vulnerable to any variety of *akrasia*. As long as people lack the *kyria episteme* that *phronesis* brings, the prospect of pleasure, or, in the case of finely-habituated people, the impulse of anger can lead them to act against their commitment to acting well. Depending upon their habituation, some—akratics—are more prone to such impulses than others. However, a morally virtuous person does not have even any potential to morally fail, because he clearly understands, at any moment, that all bad actions prevent the realisation of the end of the natural desire for the human good: *eudaimonia*. Since achieving such moral understanding difficult in extreme, morally virtuous people are few and far between. But their exceptionality is probably what makes moral virtue so admirable as the end of moral development.

CHAPTER 1

THE COGNITION OF GOOD ENDS

In this Chapter, I defend an interpretation of Aristotle according to which the rational aspect of soul is needed in discerning which ends of desire would be good.²² I argue that since not every potential end that we can desire is good, we have to discern good ends, and rational discernment (*krisis*) is required for this task. Without rational discernment, ability to focus on certain perceptions, we could not distinguish truly good ends from possibly pleasant, but ultimately bad ends. Since antiquity, authoritative commentators of Aristotle, including Aspasius, have supported this, rationalist line of interpreting his theory of value cognition, and it enjoys wide support even today.²³ The rationalist interpretation has, however, recently faced a novel challenge from Jessica Moss, against which it does not have yet received a defence.²⁴ She attempts to renew a now disregarded anti-rationalist interpretation, which emerged in the late 19th century, but was subsequently disregarded and which claims, in contrast to the rationalist interpretation, that even discerning good ends may not involve the rational aspect of soul, but only the habituation of the opposite, non-rational aspect to take pleasure from realising such ends.²⁵

The 19th century anti-rationalist interpreters, whose arguments I will review in the first part of this chapter, argued for the non-rationality of value cognition by appealing in particular to *EN* 2.4, in which Aristotle says that moral virtue does not require knowledge, and to *EN* 3.3, which claims that we do not deliberate about the ends of our desires, but only about the means to them. Certain passages in *EN* 6 and 7, in which Aristotle assigns the task for providing us with good ends to moral virtue,

²² I use the rational aspect of soul as an umbrella term for Aristotle's concepts of *to dianoetikon*, *to logikon* and their variations such as *to logou echon* and *to noetikon*.

²³ The earliest known rationalist interpreter of Aristotle is a 2nd-century commentator Aspasius (see fn. 12 below), who is also the earliest known commentator of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. A recent version of the rationalist interpretation can be found e.g. in Irwin 2007, pp. 158–97.

²⁴ I discuss Moss 2011 and 2012 in this paper. She has since revised her interpretation (2014a), but the main objection that I present in this chapter applies even to this revised version (see fn. 91 below).

²⁵ This interpretation comes from Walter 1874, and was later expanded in Zeller 1894.

may seem to reinforce these claims. The main reason for the scant following of this traditional anti-rationalist interpretation among later interpreters is, however, that in *EN* 1.13 Aristotle divides the human soul into rational and non-rational aspects, and claims that the non-rational aspect—in particular, its ‘desiring element’²⁶—must ‘obey’ (*peitharchei*) reason so as to desire good ends.²⁷ In *EN* 6.13, the philosopher adds that a person can be ‘good in the strict sense (*agathos haplos*)’²⁸ if and only if he has the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, which, as he states in *EN* 6.9, has access to the ‘the true conception’ of end.²⁹ These Aristotle’s statements, which seem to signal that moral virtue involves reason, and that the rational aspect *must* play a part in value cognition, have rendered the traditional anti-rationalist readings of *EN* 2.4, 3.3 and the selected passages of *EN* 6 and 7 to seem incoherent to many interpreters.

Moss has, however, challenged the widely endorsed assumption that returning the ancient rationalist line of interpretation is the most plausible alternative to the incoherent anti-rationalist interpretations of Aristotle’s theory of value cognition. Instead, she has suggested a novel version of the anti-rationalist interpretation, by arguing, on the basis of certain passages of *DA* 3, that insofar as representing the ends for desire is the task of *phantasia*, or, imagination—and since *phantasia* cognises those ends non-rationally, by imagining (*phantazein*) them as pleasant on the basis of one’s past pleasurable experiences about reaching certain ends—the discernment of good ends does not presuppose reason.³⁰ Habituation to realise good ends, so that one comes to enjoy from only imagining realising such ends, suffices for discerning which ends of desire are good. In value cognition, the task of the rational aspect of soul might only be to conceptualise pleasurable mental images (*phantasmata*) of ends: to label them as ‘good’ so as to enable us to use them in moral deliberation.

²⁶ *EN* 1.13 1102b30 (R). Translated by Ross 1995. In the subsequent footnotes, Ross is abbreviated as (R) and another translation of *EN* that I use, Bartlett and Collins 2009, as (B&C). If the translation is my own, there is no abbreviation. Whether I quote from (R) or (B&C) or use my own translation is determined by the accuracy and readability of either translation.

²⁷ *EN* 1.13 1102b26.

²⁸ *EN* 6.13 1144b30 (R).

²⁹ *EN* 1142b33. For more discussion about Aristotle’s statement, see fn. 22 below.

³⁰ See section 1.2 below for references to Moss 2011 and 2012.

I will study Moss' challenge in the second part of the chapter, concentrating on her interpretation about *phantasia* as exclusively non-rational ability to cognise good ends, and on how that interpretation relates to the received interpretation of *phantasia*, according to which it is a capacity that entirely belongs neither to the rational nor to the non-rational aspect of the soul. In the third part, I will attempt to show a way for the rationalist line of interpretation to address her arguments. I believe Moss overlooks some serious problems to which her interpretation is susceptible, but which the rationalist interpretation can avoid, while, however, also providing us with a tried and tested account of Aristotle's theory of value cognition.

1.1 RATIONALIST INTERPRETATION

Aristotle states that our desires are aimed at two types of ends: '[s]ome (ends) are activities (*energeiai*) others products apart from the activities that produce them'.³¹ Only the former types can be said to be good without introducing any further qualifications, because 'where there are ends apart from actions (*praxeis*), it is the nature of the product to be better than the activities.'³² For the activities undertaken only in order to gain a certain product (e.g. a flute, pleasure, money or honour) can be good only insofar as they help in bringing about that product, whereas only an activity, or, action (*praxis*) undertaken (also) for its own sake can be good as such. Since Aristotle also thinks that people do not need to use reason to pursue pleasure, at least—for non-rational animals can have this pursuit, too³³—we do not need to ask if discerning the latter types of ends must involve the rational part of soul. However, the question is pertinent with the former types, as Aristotle nowhere explicitly states if it is needed in discerning an end as unqualifiedly good (*agathos haplos*).

According to the rationalist interpretation, the philosopher's position is, however, that discerning ends as unqualifiedly good—henceforth simply 'good ends'—must require reason. This interpretation has ancient origins: for example, the earliest

³¹ *EN* 1.1 1094a3–4 (R).

³² *Ibid.* 4-5 (R).

³³ See e.g. *EN* 1.4 1095b13–20.

known commentator to *EN*, Aspasius, endorses it.³⁴ The interpretation begins from *EN* 1.13, in which Aristotle claims that human soul is divisible into two aspects, rational and non-rational: ‘one aspect of [soul] is non-rational (*alogon*), another has reason (*logos*)’ and ‘reason [...] exhorts [people] towards the best’.³⁵ If the rational aspect desires on the basis of cognising value—discerning what is the best—then the non-rational aspect may not, and this can constitute the difference between the two aspects. The non-rational aspect is further divisible into purely vegetative pursuits and the desire that can be affected by the value cognition of the rational aspect.³⁶ The desire that can be so affected (*epithumia*)—which I will simply call ‘non-rational desire’ from now on—has to characteristically do ‘with what is pleasant or painful’, as Aristotle specifies in *EN* 3.2, ‘unlike choice of good action (*prohairesis*)’ that results from the desire of the rational aspect (*boulesis*).³⁷ As the cognition of value is thus not about pleasure, and non-rational desire is concerned especially with pleasure, it seems that good ends cannot be discerned without the activity of the rational aspect. Aristotle adds to this, in *EN* 1.13, that although the desire of the non-rational aspect can be guided by the rational aspect, it nevertheless tends to ‘strain against’ the dictates of the rational aspect.³⁸ Hence he must also hold that we can desire an end that we discern as good with our rational abilities independently of whether we anticipate that pursuing will be pleasant or not.

If this interpretation is right, Aristotle’s division of human desires on the basis of their ends—excluding those desires that are only for the products of actions and the vegetative desires that bear no relation to value cognition—turns out to be as follows:

³⁴ See e.g. Aspasius, *Comm.* 40:5-15 (*ad EN* 2.2 1103b31-1104b3) for an explicit endorsement: even with virtuous people, it is the task of reason to say ‘that this must be done and that this must not be done’ and to justify why (alluding to Aristotle’s distinction between *to hoti* and *dioti* in *EN* 1.4). Aspasius comments to *EN* 1.13 (36:1-5) that in virtuous people, “the desiring and emotive part is said *to partake* in reason in that it ‘is heeding of it’ (*cit. EN* 1.13 1102b31), just as we also say that we take a certain account of our father.” According to Aspasius’ interpretation, we thus seem to require input of the rational part to discern good actions, to justify them, and even to be motivated to perform them.

³⁵ *EN* 1.13 1102a27–b18.

³⁶ Aristotle writes in *EN* 1.13 1102a31–1102b12 that we have non-rational vegetative desires of nutrition and growth that ‘are mostly displayed in sleep’ (i.e. that cannot be affected by value cognition) and do not differ between good and bad people. Therefore Aristotle concludes that we should ‘let them be’ while discussing virtue. Aristotle distinguishes them the desires that are non-rational, but which can be affected by reason (*logos*) in 1102b13-14.

³⁷ *EN* 3.2 1111b17.

³⁸ *EN* 1.13 1102b21.

Rational desire (*boulesis*): Desiring to *phi* by discerning the goodness of *phi*-ing

Non-rational desire (*epithumia*): Desiring to *phi* by anticipating (typically) the pleasure of *phi*-ing (there are probably also some other non-rational ends apart from pleasure, but Aristotle does not openly speak of them in *EN* 1.13, because for him, the desire of sensual pleasure is the principal opponent of rational desire³⁹).

Although Aristotle thinks that, provided that *phi*-ing is good, it should also feel pleasant,⁴⁰ he also concedes that the two above desires are often directed to different ends. As he argues in *EN* 1.7 and 10.7, the best human end (*to telos*), the completion of which achieving *any* other good end (such as receiving rightful honours, just financial rewards, proper pleasures or constructing good flutes) advances, is the life of acting well in which contemplation has a central role, or, *eudaimonia*.⁴¹ Because the best end towards which reason exhorts us is thus highly abstract, pursuing it may not feel immediately pleasant, unlike the pursuit of some other ends, such as those of eating or drinking, which may not, however, help in realising *eudaimonia*, provided that they are excessive (or sometimes defective, see Aristotle's famous doctrine of mean in *EN* 2.6). The conflict between the immediate pleasure of excesses and ends that bring us closer to *eudaimonia* is the source of our non-rational desire often straining against the rational one. Habituation to enjoy pursuing ends that advance *eudaimonia* should make acting well feel more and more immediately pleasant, eventually surpassing all excessive pleasures.⁴² However, only habituation does not suffice for virtue. In *EN* 6.13, Aristotle concludes that for this, also reason is needed:

³⁹ Cf. *EN* 2.9 1109b7-8, in which Aristotle states we are the most inclined to go into excesses with regard to pleasure, and thus we should primarily guard ourselves against inappropriate pleasures.

⁴⁰ *EN* 10.5 1175a29 (B&C): '[F]or the pleasure proper to the activity helps increase it: those who engage in an activity with pleasure judge each particular better and are more precise about it. For example, those who delight in practicing geometry become skilled geometers [...] and each of the rest will advance in their respective work because they delight in it'. Aristotle continues by arguing that enjoying good activities also makes those activities more permanent and better overall.

⁴¹ See *EN* 1.7 1098a13-1 and 10.7.

⁴² See e.g. *EN* 2.3 1104b3-13 (R): '[...] virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from good ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as to both delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought, this is the right education'. Similar statements can be found in, e.g., *EN* 3.12 1119b13ff and *EN* 10.9 1179a26-31.

Virtue is not only a characteristic that is in accord with right reason (*kata ton orthon logon*), but also the one that involves the right reason (*meta tou orthou logou*). [...] It is clear, then, on the basis of what has been said, that it is neither possible to be properly virtuous (*kyrios agathos*) without practical reason (*phronesis*), nor it is possible to have *phronesis* without the moral virtue.⁴³

Because proper virtue (*kyria arête*) is acting that is not only in accordance with, but also involves the right reason (*orthos logos*), acquiring it is not only a matter of habituation to enjoy acting well—for example, abstaining from eating or drinking too much—until one immediately begins to enjoy this way of acting. This would be acting only in accordance with the right reason. Rather, proper virtue is acting well, *because* such acting brings about *eudaimonia*, not only insofar it would bring about pleasure.⁴⁴ In order to act from the right reason, one needs, as Aristotle reminds in *EN* 6, to develop the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, which has cognitive access to this ‘true conception of end’,⁴⁵ and commands us to act on the basis of it.⁴⁶ The same requirement is visible in the above conclusion of *EN* 6.13, that one does not have *phronesis* unless one is properly virtuous, acts *kata ton orthon logon*, and *vice versa*.

The above lessons drawn from *EN* 1.13 and 6.13 seem to imply that one cannot learn to pursue the that are good without qualification by habituation only, or without

⁴³ *EN* 6.13 1144b25–32.

⁴⁴ See *EN* 2.4 1105a29–b5 and *EN* 4.1 1120a23–4, in which Aristotle says that a virtuous person performs good actions because they are *kala*, or, noble. Since he also thinks that the human good consists in acting well—in *EN* 1.4 1095a19–20—it is generally accepted (and argued more extensively for by, e.g., Achtenberg 2002, pp. 8–9, and Irwin 2007, p. 207) that *to kalon* refers to the human good in this context. Aristotle also identifies the human good with the ‘noblest thing’ in *EN* 1.8 1099a24.

⁴⁵ In *EN* 6.10 1142b30–33, Aristotle writes: ‘if then, it is characteristic of *phronimoi* to have deliberated well, good deliberation (*euboulia*) will be correctness with regard to the means (*pros*) to the end (*to telos*), of which *phronesis* is the true conception (*hypolepsis*).’ The grammar of this passage permits that *phronesis* could be a true conception of either (1) ‘the end’ or (2) ‘the means to the end.’ It may seem that option (1) (adopted by Aquinas, *Comm. ad loc.*, and later by Bostock 2000, p. 85, and Price 2011, p. 227) would allow us to make the passage to cohere with Aristotle’s specification in *EN* 6.12 that *phronesis* is concerned with good ends, unlike cleverness (*deinotes*), which is only concerned with the means to various ends (see Berti 2008b, p. 49). The interpretative option (2) (formulated by Walter 1874, pp. 470–2, and later adopted by Aubenque 1965) might thus seem conflate *phronesis* with *deinotes*. I think, however, that we should not accept the option (1) to avoid the conflation, because there are also passages in *EN* 6 that preclude *phronesis* from grasping the end (*EN* 6.12 1144a7–9 and *EN* 6.13 1145a5–7, quoted on p. 24 below). Since in order to select the correct means to the end, *phronesis* has, however, to be nevertheless *aware* of the end, some faculty other than it has to provide it with the correct conception of the end (see Natali 2014, p. 194). The interpretative option (2) allows this, and can be specified to avoid conflating *phronesis* with *deinotes*. If *only phronesis* has cognitive access to the true conception of the end, only it enables one to deliberate well about how to bring about *eudaimonia*. *Deinotes* can be correct deliberation about how to realise ends other than *eudaimonia*.

⁴⁶ In *EN* 6.13 1144b28, Aristotle identifies *phronesis* with the right reason (*orthos logos*) and in *EN* 6.10 1143a8–9, the philosopher tells us that *phronesis* issues commands (*epitaktikon estin*).

discerning that those ends are good—which requires *phronesis*. Many recent rationalist interpreters—e.g. John Cooper, Norman Dahl and Terence Irwin⁴⁷—have given their support for this interpretation on the basis of these conclusions. The anti-rationalist interpretation, introduced in the 19th century as an alternative to this ancient line, first by Julius Walter and then in an expanded form by Eduard Zeller,⁴⁸ has proved to be less enduring; as far as I know, no recent interpreter had endorsed it until Moss. The anti-rationalist interpretation, as presented by these scholars, is centred in *EN* 2.4, 3.3 and some passages in *EN* 6 and 7, which may indeed seem to present Aristotle as thinking that discerning good ends does not have to involve the rational aspect of soul. Let me quote those passages and show how an anti-rationalist reads them, and then how the rationalist interpreters could address these readings.

In *EN* 2.4, Aristotle, after remarking that acting well is not yet proper virtue, because we only *become* virtuous by acting well, lists the additional conditions of being a virtuous person. Someone is virtuous only if he, in addition to acting well:

First, acts knowingly (*proton men ean eidos*), second, if he acts by choosing and by choosing the actions in question for themselves; and third, if he acts while being in a steady and unwavering state. But, when it comes to virtues, knowledge (*eidos*) has no, or little, force, whereas the other two conditions amount to not a small part of but rather the whole affair—the conditions that are in fact met as a result of doing just and temperate things many times.⁴⁹

If acting knowingly is unimportant for moral virtue, as Aristotle seems to say above, and if we become virtuous only through habituation, by coming to enjoy acting well, then it may seem that discerning good ends does not require having any conception of end, the acquisition of which—at least the correct one—presupposes reason.

This passage in *EN* 3.3 may seem to reinforce this anti-rationalist interpretation:

⁴⁷ Cooper 1975, Dahl 1984, Irwin 2007.

⁴⁸ Walter 1874, Zeller 1896.

⁴⁹ *EN* 2.4 1105a29–b5 (B & C, ‘moderate’ replaced with ‘temperate’).

We deliberate not about ends but about the things towards (*pros*) ends (*tele*). For a doctor does not deliberate (*boulein*) whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall persuade, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does any one else deliberate about his end. They put in place the end (*themeno* to *telos*) and consider how and by what things the end is to be attained.⁵⁰

In above passage, Aristotle claims that just as doctors do not deliberate whether to heal or not, so it could be that we do not deliberate (*boulein*) about whether to pursue some good end or not, but we put our ends in proper places in some other way. The following passages in *EN* 6 and 7 clarify that it is neither *phronesis* nor even *logos*, but moral virtue that correctly discerns which potential ends of desire would be good:

Virtue makes the end correct, *phronesis* the means to the end.⁵¹

Choice (*prohairesis*) is not right without either *phronesis* or virtue: for the one makes us [to have] the [correct] end, and the other [to have] the [correct] means to it.⁵²

It is not that reason (*logos*) is teaching about (*didaskalikos*) the starting-points, but either natural or habituated virtue teaches the right belief (*tou orthodoxein*) about the starting-point.⁵³

The anti-rationalist interpreters have traditionally taken the above claims of *EN* 3.3, 6 and *EE* to imply together that habituated or natural virtue, instead of the rational aspect of soul, puts in place our ends, and at most we can use our *phronesis* to deliberate how to realise them. As Zeller famously concludes, ‘the natural basis of insight [*phronesis*] is the intellectual acuteness that enables us to find and apply proper means to a given end.’⁵⁴ Hence it may seem that we do not need the activity of the rational aspect to discern good ends, but only to calculate how to realise them.

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that none of the passages quoted above are incompatible with the rationalist interpretation in the end. The passage of *EN* 2.4 only denies the importance of one’s knowledge being *eidos*, or, form, for moral virtue. Even the rational discernment of good ends would not, however, involve *eidos* in any case, because, as Aristotle has explained in *EN* 1.6, that (even) things that are good in themselves (e.g. ‘*phronesis*, sight, certain pleasures and honour’) do

⁵⁰ *EN* 3.3 1112b12–16.

⁵¹ *EN* 6.12 1144a7-9.

⁵² *EN* 6.13 1145a5-7.

⁵³ *EN* 7.8 1151a17-19.

⁵⁴ Zeller 1894, p. 186.

not seem to have any common *eidōs* that could account for their goodness.⁵⁵ Likewise, the passage *EN* 3.3 claims only that we do not deliberate (*buōlein*) whether to pursue a certain end or not—a view with which many rationalist interpreters agree⁵⁶—for Aristotle’s words, which leave open *what* puts our ends in place, does not preclude the rational aspect of our souls from discerning (*krinein*) good ends. Neither do the quoted passages from *EN* 6 and 7. Moral virtue can make the end correct, and not *phronesis* that has only a cognitive access to the end, but this does not amount to denying moral virtue from being rational. For virtue has a rational element even if we subtract *phronesis* from it: apart from this, deliberative reason, we have also another type of reason, *nous*. Aristotle claims in *EN* 6.11 that ‘[what discerns] both the first principles [i.e. the end] and the last things is *nous*.’⁵⁷ The discernment of the end (*krisis*) by *nous* does not need deliberation; on the contrary, Aristotle speaks of it in *DA* as if such *krisis* were analogous to visual perception instead.⁵⁸ *Nous* seems to be thus akin to intuitive reason.⁵⁹ Hence the philosopher’s claim about virtue, and not *phronesis* making the end correct can *only* imply what it explicitly says, that *phronesis* is unessential for this task, *not* that also *nous* must be.

We can now see that the passages of *EN* that may initially seem to support the anti-rationalist interpretation are compatible with the rationalist interpretation. Since the former seems, however, unable to accommodate those Aristotle’s passages, in *EN* 1.13 and 6.13, that seem to imply that discerning the good ends, and moral virtue as whole, presuppose rational abilities, the rationalist interpretation prevails today.

1.2 MOSS’ ANTI-RATIONALIST CHALLENGE

In her 2012 book, *Aristotle and the Apparent Good*, and in a paper published in 2011, Jessica Moss has, however, challenged the conclusion that Aristotle must be

⁵⁵ *EN* 1.6 1096b16-26. Aristotle uses the concepts of *eidōs* and *idea* interchangeably in this passage.

⁵⁶ See e.g. Bowditch 2008, pp. 326–336 and Reeve 2013, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *EN* 6.11 1143a35-1143b1. This passage is discussed on pp. 45-6 below.

⁵⁸ See *DA* 3.3 427a19–22, the passage is quoted on p. 15 below.

⁵⁹ Cf. Aristotle contrasting *nous* and *phronesis* in *EN* 6.5 1142a24-31: ‘*phronesis* is concerned with the ultimate particular, since actions are of this nature’, but ‘*nous* is of the definitions.’ In order to reach a definition, also *nous* needs, however, grasp the last thing (see 1143a35-1143b1 and pp. 45-6), just as *phronesis* has to have a cognitive access to the concept of the good in order to deliberate about actions.

rationalist on account of his views in *EN* 1.13 and 6.13. She suggests that Aristotle might only mean that reason is necessary for the pursuit of good ends—at least concepts, the use and formation of which requires reason, ‘help us determine the contents of our perceptions’—but nevertheless think that moral virtue does not presuppose the use of reason in discerning good ends as such.⁶⁰ According to Moss, Aristotle can think that ‘we want our ends, because we find them good,’ but this does not have to mean that they are ‘what we rationally judge good.’⁶¹ So far, the anti-rationalist interpretation, which did not recognise that these two views could be separated, that discerning a good end could be non-rational, while determining *that* the end is good require reason, has simply not looked for evidence in the right places. Moss thinks that evidence for Aristotle’s anti-rationalism is to be found especially in *DA* 3, in which the philosopher discusses *phantasia*, often translated as imagination.

Until now, most interpreters of Aristotle’s theory of moral cognition seem to have regarded *phantasia* as a cognitive capacity that cannot be classified as being entirely either rational or non-rational.⁶² According to current mainstream interpretation, one task of *phantasia* is to enable us to imagine the ends of desire, which is necessary for any kind of desiring. For in order to desire anything, we have to be able to imagine what would the realising the end of our desire be like: honourable, pleasant *etc.*⁶³ Aristotle thus writes in *DMA*: ‘*phantasia* suitably prepares desire; and *phantasia* arises through *nous* or through perception (*aesthesis*).’⁶⁴ Now, imagining an end of desire (*phantasma*), call it *x*, the mainstream interpretation takes the philosopher’s statement to tell, requires either only perception (e.g. smelling a pleasant smell, seeing *x* emitting it), and at some other times also *nous* (e.g. discerning *x* as the best

⁶⁰ Moss 2012, p. 40. Moss does not clarify here what ‘determination’ of the contents of perception means. As we see on pp. 30 below, she must, however, mean *determining our perceptions with certain concepts* – making it explicit in words that ‘what I see is a good end (or ‘rose’ as on p. 30).’

⁶¹ Moss 2012, p. 158.

⁶² Aristotle may seem to claim so in *DA* 3.9 432a27-b1: ‘we shall find parts [of soul] [...] which cannot be classified as either rational or irrational [...] (such as) the imaginative [...]. However, he also adds (b2) ‘it is very difficult to say with which of the other [parts of soul] it is the same or not the same’, so his claim is not decisive. In the same context, he also says that bipartite division of soul is insufficient to describe the soul, because there are (a24) “in a sense infinity of parts.” Cf. *EN* 1.13 (see section 1.1 above), in which Aristotle seems, however, to agree with the bipartite division.

⁶³ E.g. Caston 1996, p. 42, Lorenz 2009, pp. 119–22 and Polansky 2007 *ad loc.* *DA* 3.9 428b10–429a9, in which Aristotle defines *phantasia* as that which enables motion on the basis of perception.

⁶⁴ *DMA* 702a18–19.

end to pursue among many possibilities). The discernment of good ends presupposes the rational aspect of soul not only according to the passage of *EN* 6.11, quoted on p. 10 above. Also in *DA* 3.11, Aristotle writes that rational (*logistike*) *phantasia* is necessary for this purpose, precisely for ‘measuring by one standard, for one pursues the superior [of various possible ends],’ and because such a measuring is needed ‘so that [we] are able to pick one [*phantasma*] from many possible *phantasmata*,’⁶⁵ While perceptual (*aisthetike*) *phantasia* belongs to all animals capable of moving themselves on the basis of sense perception,⁶⁶ the rational *phantasia* belongs exclusively to humans, for only their souls have rational aspect. Since human *phantasia* can thus involve either only sense perception or also the activity of the rational aspect of soul, it cannot be exclusively classified, according to the mainstream interpretation, as entirely either non-rational or rational faculty.

Moss thinks, however, that there is an alternative to this interpretation. She points out that Aristotle states, for example, in *EN* 3.4, ‘without qualification and in truth the object of [rational desire] is the good, but for each person it is the apparent good.’⁶⁷ As Aristotle seems to contrast here the object of rational desire with the apparent good, the apparent good (*to phainomenon agathon*) must refer the object of our perceptual, non-rational *phantasia*. Hence his statement may imply that everyone desires what she non-rationally perceives as good.⁶⁸ In *EE* 7.2, Aristotle, Moss points out, elaborates his view and explains *how* we can non-rationally perceive good ends:

⁶⁵ *DA* 3.11 434a7–10. The passage is also quoted by Lorenz 2009, p. 122, to establish a similar point. His translations is that rational *phantasia* occurs ‘in animals capable of reasoning: for the decision whether to do this or that is already a task for reasoning; and one must measure by a single standard; for one pursues what is superior; hence one has the ability to make one out of many *phantasmata*.’

⁶⁶ See for example *DA* 3.10 433b27-30 and 433b31-434a4, *DA* 2.2 413b21-3 cf. *DA* 3.10 428a10ff, in which Aristotle states, however, that ‘ants, bees or grubs’ do not have *phantasia*.

⁶⁷ *EN* 3.4 1113a23-4, also *MA* 700b23-9. Quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 4.

⁶⁸ Moss 2012, p. 4. Cf. *EN* 3.5 1114b14 (R) ‘to both mean alike, the good and the bad, the end [good] appears and is fixed by nature.’ This claim may seem to support Moss, because if good is ‘fixed by nature,’ how could it be the object of rational desire? However, as usual, Aristotle adds a qualification to his claim: even if the way in which good appears to us were fixed by our nature, ‘it is by being persons of certain kind that we assume the end to be so and so’, and it depends on rational choice what kind of persons we are, i.e. whether our nature becomes oriented towards good or evil (1114a3-21).

The object of desire is either the good or the apparent good. And this is why the pleasant is an object of desire, for it is an apparent good, for some believe it is [good] and for some it appears [good] although they do not believe so. For *phantasia* and belief are not in the same part of the soul.⁶⁹

Provided that everyone desires what appears to them as good, the first sentence of this passage cannot mean (*pace* the rationalist interpreters) that we can sometimes desire only the true good, regardless of what our *phantasia* represents as good. Rather, it must only mean, as Moss argues, that apparent good—the end of our non-rational desire—either or not corresponds with what we rationally discern to be a good end.⁷⁰ The second sentence of the passage adds pleasure is the end of our non-rational desire. Therefore pleasure *is* the apparent good.⁷¹ If something is not pleasant for us, it cannot appear as good for us, although we do not of course believe that everything that may appear as pleasant for us is good.⁷² Aristotle concludes the passage by stating that this disparity between belief and *phantasia* about the good is due to *phantasia* and belief residing not in the same part of human soul. Although Aristotle discusses also rational *phantasia* in *DA* 3.10, this discussion—since we have seen that all desire is based on perceptual *phantasia*—suggests Moss, can be only a description for certain ‘use which rational creatures can put the products of perceptual *phantasia*’, that is, referring to non-rational appearances in deliberation.⁷³

Phantasia may seem, however, not only separate from the rational aspect of soul, but also opposed to it, just like the non-rational aspect is.⁷⁴ For example, according to *DA* 3.10 ‘[m]any men their *phantasia* contrary to their knowledge, and in all other animals there is no thinking (*nous*) or calculation but only (*alla*) *phantasia*’⁷⁵ On Moss’ view, instead of being outside the division of the aspects of soul, as we have

⁶⁹ *EE* 7.2 1235b26-29. Quoted by Moss 2012, on p. xi, 6, 8, 30, 36 fn. 2 and 48.

Since this passage is from *EE*, and there seems to be no corresponding views presented in *EN*, one may reasonably doubt, however, whether the passage presents Aristotle’s final view about the issue.

⁷⁰ Moss 2012, p. ix. Cf. *DA* 3.10 433a27: ‘the object [of our non-rational desire] may be either the real or apparent good.’ Since non-rational desire is incapable of desiring the real good (*eudaimonia*) as such, this passage may be taken to signal, in favour of Moss, that Aristotle wants to establish only correspondence, that the real good can correspond with what appears good for our non-rational desire.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30 and 36 fn. 2.

⁷² See Moss 2012, pp. 106-112, in which Moss discusses illusionary *phantasmata*.

⁷³ Moss 2012, p. 146.

⁷⁴ Cf. *EN* 1.13 1102b21.

⁷⁵ *DA* 3.10 433a10-12. As quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 16 and 138.

seen the mainstream interpretation to claim, this passage shows that *phantasia* and reason are ‘mutually exclusive.’⁷⁶ She also concludes that *phantasia* must be within the non-rational aspect of soul.⁷⁷ Moss’ conclusion might seem right in the light of the previous quotation: if *phantasia* were outside Aristotle’s division of soul, then the philosopher would not have presumably described *phantasia* as if it were opposed to the rational aspect of soul, able to stimulate people to act against their knowledge. Provided that we thus take *phantasia* to belong to non-rational aspect of soul, as Moss advises, and since *phantasia* represents the ends of desires, then the ends of even our rational desires, good ends, would be perceived by the non-rational aspect of our soul, not by a faculty that is outside Aristotle’s division of soul.⁷⁸

The apparently anti-rationalist passage of *EN* 3.3, claiming that we do not deliberate about our ends, and the passages of *EN* 6 and 7.8 that also preclude *phronesis* from setting them, support this conclusion. The conclusion would permit that good actions do not need to be performed in the knowledge (*eidos*) of their end, as Aristotle states in *EN* 2.4, for that end would now be a non-rational representation. Moss attempts, however, to show that apart from these passages traditionally cited by anti-rationalists, her interpretation, *unlike* the previous anti-rationalist interpretations, enables us to read *also* *EN* 1.13 and 6.13 anti-rationalistically, thus making the anti-rationalist interpretation an overall plausible alternative to the rationalist one.

Before we can proceed to assessing Moss’ alternative readings of those passages, we need to clarify, however, what she thinks moral discernment (*krisis*) is. Moss

⁷⁶ According to Moss 2012, p. 138, *DA* 3.10 433a10-12 shows that ‘*phantasia* and intellect’ are ‘mutually exclusive’. On p. 16, Moss argues the quoted passage (together with *DA* 3.10 433a9 and b11) to show in addition that ‘desire moves [one to act] with the aid either of intellect or *phantasia*’ and ‘*phantasia* plays role roughly parallel to that of intellect’ in motivating action.

⁷⁷ See Moss 2012, pp. 64-6. For a more condensed and explicit account, see Moss 2011, p. 252. Although *DA* 3.10 433a10-12, as interpreted by Moss 2012 (see fn. 54 above), could have justified this claim, Moss 2011 does not cite it. Instead, she claims (p. 252, in fn.) that ‘for an outright equation of the ethical works’ non-rational passionate part with the perceptive and phantastic part of the psychological works see *EE* 2.1 1219b23.’ However, unlike *DA* 3.10 433a9-12, this passage does not clearly equate the non-rational part and *phantasia*: ‘for in sleep the vegetative part is more active, while the perceptive and appetitive are incomplete.’ For Aristotle does not say that ‘the perceptive’ and ‘appetitive’ are the same part, but speaks of them in plural, thus possibly denoting different parts.

⁷⁸ Cf. *DA* 3.11 434a8–10 quoted on pp. 26-7 above. The passage does not, however, have to contradict Moss’ claim, because in it Aristotle does not exactly argue that ‘discerning one from many *phantasmata*’ could not be entirely motivated by non-rational *phantasia*, e.g. by receiving a supremely intense pleasure from focusing on just one particular *phantasma* among various *phantasmata*.

argues that we perceive good ends through pleasant sensations—we do not discern them—but we cannot simply perceive which potential pleasure-inducing *phantasma* is ‘the superior [of various pursuable ends], because that task requires picking out one perception from many, discerning it. In received interpretative use, choosing the end that one should pursue means bringing particular discernments under the general concept of good—building practical syllogisms such as in *EN* 7.3: ‘dry foods are good for men’; ‘I am a man’; ‘this food is dry’; therefore ‘this food is good for me’. Moss proposes, however, that although we of course *can* build syllogisms to discern good ends on the basis of our value perceptions, we do not have to do so,⁷⁹ because non-rational *phantasia*, if it were only properly habituated, could receive perceptions in a way that already entails discerning of their value in relation to one another.⁸⁰

In the beginning of her 2012 book—before presenting her above proposal about the power of habituation to enhance the perception (*aisthesis*) of good ends into the discernment (*krisis*) of the most valuable available end—Moss focuses on Aristotle’s statement in *DA* 3.3 that ‘thinking (*noein*) and understanding (*phronein*) seem to be just like having a perception (*aesthesis*) of something, for in both cases the soul discerns (*krinein*) and recognizes something of the things that are’.⁸¹ Moss takes this brief statement to announce that, since even perceptions, which do not presuppose reason, because even non-rational animals have them, can be discernments (*krisis*), discernments can be non-rational. ‘There is’, states Moss, ‘nothing specially rational or intellectual about [*krisis*]: even a simple animal who lacks any mental powers more sophisticated than sense of touch counts as [discerner].’⁸² Or, as Moss put the same point in her 2011 article, since focusing on certain perceptions such as sensations of touch ‘is ‘available to animals as well as to people,’ making even discernments must also be available ‘to the non-rational part of human soul’.⁸³ Aristotle may seem to validate Moss’ views in *DMA*, in which he briefly remarks ‘both *phantasia* and perception (*aesthesis*) hold the same place as *nous*, for all are

⁷⁹ For this particular claim, see Moss 2009, pp. 145–6.

⁸⁰ Moss 2012, p. 21.

⁸¹ *DA* 3.3 427a19–22. As quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 3. Cf. 432a16 and *DMA* 700b17–20.

⁸² Moss 2012, p. 3.

⁸³ Moss 2011, p. 252.

kritika'.⁸⁴ Non-rational animals cannot of course learn concepts, which limits their discernments to the sources of certain sensations; but once we have learned a concept, for example, 'rose', Moss assumes, we can discern objects that cause certain familiar sensual perceptions for us (i.e. have certain shape, smell and colour) also *as* roses without each time conceptually determining that each such object is a rose.⁸⁵

If we can discern, for example, roses on the basis of our memorized perceptions, without having the relevant concept always in mind, *phantasia* might equally allow discerning an end that cause certain familiar perceptions as good without necessarily attending to the concept of good, and hence without 'thinking or understanding,' i.e. the activity of the rational aspect of soul, being required for the task. Moss points out that, in the already quoted passage of *DA* 3.11, Aristotle states that humans are 'able to pick one [*phantasma*] from many possible *phantasmata*.' According to her, this implies that *phantasia* enables us to 'synthesise a single image which represents one option as overall best' from the various perceptions that we have memorised.⁸⁶

Even if we could discern what is the 'overall best' with *phantasia*, considering value discernment as analogous to discerning roses, or any animal discernment, and therefore non-rational, would need, however, a further justification. While many animals can discern the sources of sensuous pleasure, and virtually every person with a healthy sense of sight and memory can discern roses, this is not the case with good ends. Discerning those ends, Aristotle says in *EN* 2.8, is 'not for everyone nor it is easy.'⁸⁷ According to *EN* 3.4, 'a (morally) virtuous person discerns each thing (i.e. good end) rightly, and in each case the truth appears to (*phainetai*) him.' Apparently, *only* a virtuous person discerns them rightly, 'for distinctive things', the philosopher continues, 'are noble (*kala*) and pleasant according to (*kata*) each disposition.'⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *DMA* 700b20-21. As quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 10.

⁸⁵ Moss 2012, p. 40.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 148 Moss does not unfortunately explain how this process takes place.

⁸⁷ *EN* 2.8 1109a28-9.

⁸⁸ *EN* 3.4 1113a29-32. Moss (2011) presents her interpretation of the passage on p. 25: 'If the virtuous person's ability to perceive facts about value [moral cognition] is a matter of being pleased and pained in the right ways, or admiring and being disgusted by the right things [as the passage says], then this perception [moral cognition] is an operation of non-rational cognition'. Her 2012 book lists several additional passages in favour of this conclusion (pp.160-1), but this passage is her main support.

Aristotle's above conclusions may encourage a rationalist interpreter to argue that learning to discern good ends is 'not for everyone', because it must require some intellectual education, even if many other kinds of discernments would not. Moss can justify, however, her interpretation against such an argument. If the accuracy of discerning an end as good depends upon the sensations of pleasure that imagining (*phantazein*) it gives to a virtuous person, then most people could not reliably discern good ends on their own even if they had learned what is good for humans. Non-virtuous people's *phantasia*, as *DA* 3.10 tells us, is prone to mistakes, probably, because they only have not been habituated to enjoy performing the actions that contribute to the human good. 'The road [to unqualifiedly good ends]', writes Aristotle in *EE* 7.2, is 'through pleasure: it is necessary for fine (*kala*) things to be pleasant.'⁸⁹ In *EN*, he confirms this, argues Moss, for example, by writing that 'the whole affair both in virtue and in the political art is about pleasures (*hedone*) and pains.'⁹⁰ In these passages, Aristotle, according to Moss, does not claim as if coming to enjoy acting well would only *help* one in achieving moral virtue together with intellectual education—as a rationalist interpreter might like to say—but rather as if *it would suffice* for the task.⁹¹ Habituation gets us to associate acting well with experiences of pleasure, the memorising of which allows us imagine the pleasure ensuing from a certain virtuous action, having a pleasurable *phantasma* about a good end. And having such a *phantasma*, we have seen Moss to argue, is discerning the end as good. The rational aspect of soul has no role to play in value cognition.

Moss' interpretation of Aristotle's theory of value cognition thus implies that one can become able to discern which ends are good through only being habituated to enjoy acting well. If imagining a certain action produces pleasure to a well-habituated, i.e., virtuous, person, then that action must be a good end. Since her interpretation, thinks Moss, holds true with any good action, we can now attempt test it with the kind of action that one could think as the most obvious counterexample to

⁸⁹ *EE* 7.2 1237a6-7, as quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 202.

⁹⁰ *EN* 2.3 115a10-12, as quoted by Moss, *ibid*.

⁹¹ *Ibid*. However, the passages do not have to be read as making such a claim. They can also be read as only rhetorically stressing (for they employ rhetorical language) that learning to derive pleasure from acting well is essential for becoming virtuous, without excluding the need for rational development.

it: a heroically courageous action. According to Moss' conception, even a heroic warrior, thanks to his habituated character, can discern that fighting until death in a battle is a good end only by having sensations of pleasure while imagining such a heroic death. Since acting well can often be physically painful—extremely so in this case—the pleasure that a virtuous warrior derives from imagining it relies on the synthesising ability of his *phantasia* to pick one possible course of action as the 'best' among the perceptions that he has memorised. Even if also non-virtuous warrior could somehow imagine that a heroic death may, e.g., contribute to the future *eudaimonia* of his *polis* and is thus the best course of action available *etc.*,⁹² this awareness—since he is not habituated to derive sufficient pleasure from acting well, and thus from imagining herself engaged in such acting in difficult situations neither—would not suffice to drive her to prefer heroic death over running away.

Despite Moss' interpretation seems to be able to provide a conceivable account of even heroically courageous acting, it might, however, still be difficult to conceive *how* perceiving an end as pleasant could be the same as discerning a good end—or, even, how perceiving a certain shape and colour could be the same as discerning a rose *etc.* One might think there is a 'naturalistic fallacy' in any such an equation.⁹³ However, even if Aristotle did not consider it important to elucidate this matter any further, it would nevertheless be good news for anti-rationalist interpreters if the philosopher simply thought that good ends could be discerned non-rationally, as Moss reads him in *DA* 3. They could admit, as Moss does, that '[c]ertainly, Aristotle holds [...] that we want our ends because we find them good',⁹⁴ and specify that the non-rational aspect of the soul, insofar as *phantasia* is non-rational, discerns their goodness in imagined pleasure. Hence they could hold that discerning good ends does not require the activity of the rational aspect of soul, provided that they could,

⁹² Kraut 1990, p. 122, thinks this is Aristotle's justification for the virtuousness of a heroic death.

⁹³ One may of course also think that there is naturalistic fallacy—an equation of the good with natural features that cannot be shown to be synonymous to it—in Aristotle's thinking in any case: even if he would not equate pleasure with the good, he would nevertheless equate *eudaimonia* with it. However, unlike pleasure ((a state resulting from satisfying a desire or being in the state of satisfaction (*EN* 7.12 1152b33-1153a7 and 7.14) accompanied by the heating of body (*DMA* 701b33-702a1)) *eudaimonia* evades a naturalistic definition: *eudaimonia* is acting well in which contemplation has a central role.

⁹⁴ Moss 2012, p. 158. I have replaced the word 'un-Humean' with square brackets, since in this chapter I am not able to study the great question about the relation between Aristotle and Hume.

however, also plausibly deal with *EN* 1.13 and 6.13—the textual basis for the opposite rationalist interpretation—as Moss thinks her interpretation can.

Moss points out that all the earlier anti-rationalist interpreters *assumed*, just as contemporary rationalist interpreters assume, that Aristotle's division of soul in *EN* 1.13 is between our cognitive (i.e. actively discerning) and non-cognitive (i.e. only passively perceiving) capacities.⁹⁵ But since Moss has argued that the non-rational aspect of soul includes a cognitive capability—*phantasia*—she thinks that this hitherto unquestioned assumption must be revised: perhaps the *only* relevant difference between the aspects of soul is that the former discerns with concepts, the latter without.⁹⁶ According to Moss' suggested revision, the *only* task of reason in value cognition would be to label our non-rational discernments of ends with moral concepts (such as 'virtuous', 'advantageous' or 'shameful') which does not modify their content or causal efficacy, but only enables us to use them as starting-points in moral reasoning.⁹⁷ She presents the passage of *EN* 7.8 that we have already seen, to support her conclusion: 'neither indeed in [mathematics] is the *logos* instructive of the starting-points nor in [the practical case], but virtue, either natural or habituated [is instructive] of the right belief about the starting-point.'⁹⁸ Moss thinks this passage tells that 'our cognitions of the starting points of practical reasoning [i.e. of good ends] are rational, exercises of intellect—but their content derives from character, i.e. from the generalised *phantasia* that is produced through habituation.'⁹⁹ Once a person's *phantasia* has perceived an action as pleasant, which, as Moss thinks, is to discern it as good, 'intellect steps in' as she puts it in her 2011 article, 'assenting and thereby conceptualizing the appearance [...]. Now [the person] not only experiences an appearance of virtuous activity as the good, but also believes that it is so'.¹⁰⁰

In the same article, Moss argues further that Aristotle's claim regarding the necessity of acting with the involvement of right reason (*orthos logos*) for moral

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Moss 2012, pp. 223-4.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 227-228, quoting Tuozzo 1994 on p. 227: "the good and the desire 'differ only in their mode of cognition: the one [good] is conceptualized, and so involves thought, while the other [the pleasant] is unconceptualized and so involves perception (or *phantasia aisthetike*)....'"

⁹⁸ *EN* 7.8 1151a17-19, as quoted by Moss 2012 on p. 225.

⁹⁹ Moss 2012, p. 225.

¹⁰⁰ Moss 2011, p. 256.

virtue in *EN* 6.13 does not have to imply, in light of her interpretation, that a virtuous person can articulate the right reason for his acting—to act well, because such acting is good—which would require *phronesis*. Rather, the claim can imply, more modestly, that even if a person can have moral virtue as a result of non-rational habituation only—as the anti-rationalist interpretation reads *EN* 2.4 to say—it is not *said to be* proper virtue (*kyria arête*) unless he also consciously acts on the basis of the right reason. Moss explains her reading by means of the following analogue. Imagine two servants who act well. ‘The former acts on his own impulses; the latter takes the lead from his superior. And it would be reasonable enough, if somewhat odd to our ears, to say that only in the latter case is the servant truly (or strictly) an excellent one.’¹⁰¹ Proper (or strict) virtue might thus not be the same as moral virtue, as we have seen the rationalists read *EN* 6.13, but it could be moral virtue, for which the habituation of character and *phantasma* of good ends suffice, *plus* an ability to conceptualise the discernments of *phantasia* and articulate the right reason for action.

1.3 A RATIONALIST REPLY TO THE CHALLENGE

According to Moss’ anti-rationalist interpretation, the rational part of soul is not needed in discerning good ends: it is needed only for conceptualising them, deliberating about them, and articulating the reason for realising them. Once one has learned which actions are good, and has been habituated to enjoy acting well, one’s *phantasia*, which Moss interprets as an entirely non-rational faculty, suffices for discerning good ends. Rationalist interpreters have not, however, yet challenged her interpretation of *phantasia*, and her idea of applying this unorthodox interpretation to Aristotle’s theory of moral cognition. Let me attempt, however, to challenge it now.

I think that the most powerful argument against Moss interpretation would be that if it were endorsed, Aristotle would seem to be an incoherent thinker, unlike in the case of the rationalist interpretation. For Moss has not given us a compelling exegetic reason to think that the rationalist interpretation is incorrect. For example, the passage of *DA* 3.10—‘[m]any men follow their *phantasia* contrary to their

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pp. 212–213.

knowledge, and in all other animals there is no thinking or calculation but only *phantasia*¹⁰²—could also be read as only confirming that *phantasia* often leads people to moral weakness, instead of (implicitly) claiming that *phantasia* and reason are ‘mutually exclusive’, as we have seen Moss take it to claim. After all, as we have seen, Aristotle also makes a distinction between rational and perceptual *phantasia* in *DA*. Although Moss suggests that rational *phantasia* could be only a name for using perceptual *phantasia* in deliberation, which requires its perceptions to be conceptualised, this reading is no more textually justified than the mainstream reading that assumes them to be separate aspects of *phantasia*: one that cognises without concepts, another with concepts.

The other key passages outside *EN* that we have seen Moss to quote as supporting her interpretation, one in *DA* 3.3—‘thinking and understanding seem to be just like having a perception of something, for in both cases the soul discerns (*krinein*)...’¹⁰³ and another in *DMA*, ‘both *phantasia* and perception (*aesthesis*) hold the same place [in moral discernment] as *nous*, for all are *kritika*’¹⁰⁴ are far from explicit in allowing that we can discern good ends without involving the rational part of our souls. The context of the former passage reveals that Aristotle might not even agree with the claim he presents in it: the passage is presented as *endoxa*, from which Aristotle starts his discussion of *phantasia*. Although the philosopher does not explicitly reject that *phantasia* could be *kritikon* in *DA*, he argues later in 3.3 that [*phantasia*] is not the same kind of thinking (*noesis*) as *krisis* [...] for *phantasia* is up to us [...] but in forming opinions we are not free, we cannot escape the alternative of falsehood or truth.’¹⁰⁵ At face value, this argument seems to imply that *phantasia* does not discern, because discernments have truth-values, whereas *phantasmata* as such do not have to have.¹⁰⁶ With regard to the passage of *DMA*, Aristotle’s purpose is not to

¹⁰² *DA* 3.10 433a10-11. Quotations from *DA* and *DMA* are from Moss 2011 and 2012.

¹⁰³ *DA* 3.3 427a19–22.

¹⁰⁴ *DMA* 700b20-21.

¹⁰⁵ *DA* 3.3 427b16-21.

¹⁰⁶ My counterargument may not seem to be decisive, for Aristotle’s argument could also be taken to imply that although *phantasia* can discern (e.g.) good ends, as *endoxa* suggests, it cannot discern whether these discernments are true or false, i.e. reflect the validity of its own discernments, which is the task of *nous*. However, I think this is unlikely, since Aristotle’s words state that *phantasia* is not a

show that our non-rational abilities could have the power of discernment, but classify all human motivations ‘either into thought (*nous*) or desire (*orexis*),’ as he announces right before the passage (in the line that Moss omits in her quotation). In the quoted passage, Aristotle only classifies *phantasia* and *aesthesis* among motivations that belong to the class of *nous* that is, are of the rational part of soul, on account of being discerning (*kritika*). In the end, the passage may thus even seem to support the rationalist interpretation: if *phantasia* and *aesthesis* are rational motivations, then, surely, discerning good ends with them involves the activity of the rational part.

In *EN*, we saw Moss to appeal to this passage of book 3, chapter 4: ‘a virtuous person discerns each thing [i.e. good end] rightly, and in each case the truth appears to (*phainetai*) him, for distinctive things [potential ends] are noble (*kala*) and pleasant according to (*kata*) each character.’¹⁰⁷ This passage does not, however, have to establish that virtuous people discern good ends by imagining (*phantazein*) certain ends as pleasant, as Moss takes it to tell. Instead of establishing a causal connection from an end appearing as pleasant to a virtuous person to his discerning that end as good, Aristotle’s claim may only establish a correlation. He may mean that the better one’s character is, the more reliably one’s sensations indicate the goodness of a potential end, although only fully virtuous people discern good ends entirely rightly.

Let me now attempt to show why we should prefer these my alternative, rationalist readings to what Moss makes up from the above passages to back up her anti-rationalist interpretation. Aristotle’s motivation for dividing the soul into rational and non-rational aspects is the first reason. We have seen Moss argue that the division is not between our cognitive (discerning) and non-cognitive (passively perceiving) capacities, but only between conceptual and non-conceptual ones—non-rational *phantasia* does not need to use concepts, but can nevertheless discern ends as good. In this case, the division would not be, however, relevant to the question of which abilities one should develop to discern good ends, but only to the question of whether this discernment involves concepts or not. In *EN* 2.2, Aristotle seems,

discernment (*krisis*), not that it is a discernment in a qualified sense. Therefore it is safer to assume that *phantasia* needs the aid of reason to result discernments, i.e. rational *phantasia* (see pp. 26-7 above).

¹⁰⁷ *EN* 3.4 1113a29–32.

however, to be more interested in the former kind of question: ‘we study ethics not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become good’.¹⁰⁸ In light of this practical aim, it seems more likely that he would differentiate the capacities of the soul on the basis of whether they can discern which ends are good, not only on whether they utilise concepts. For the answer to the former question would help a student of ethics in deciding whether to include some intellectual education to his moral training apart from the habituation of non-rational desires, but the answer to the latter question would not have such a practical purport. Since the rationalist interpretation assumes that the division of soul is based on the division of cognitive and non-cognitive capacities, we have an initial, albeit small, reason to prefer it to Moss’ interpretation.

A more compelling reason to interpret Aristotle as a rationalist about the cognition of value, however, is that (at least) Moss’ reading of *EN* 6.13 is clearly less plausible than its rationalist alternative. Her analogy of two servants is not convincing. In fact, Aristotle seems to think its opposite by stating in the chapter ‘it is neither possible to be properly virtuous without *phronesis*, nor it is possible to have *phronesis* without virtue’.¹⁰⁹ Instead of thinking that only a servant who acts well from obedience to the ends given by his master (who, in Moss analogy, stands for *phronesis*) would be truly excellent—implying that proper virtue is already developed virtue *plus phronesis*—it seems he would rather opt that only the servant, who acts well on the basis of his own reasoning is at all excellent—i.e., that any virtue presupposes *phronesis*, and is thus proper virtue. For example, in *EN* 1.4, Aristotle approvingly quotes Hesiod’s *Works and Days*: ‘the one is altogether best (*ariston*), who himself knows (*noein*) all things, but good in his turn too is he who obeys one who speaks well’.¹¹⁰ Moreover, in *EN* 6.13, right after the quoted passage, the philosopher seems to attempt to answer to a question that he presents in the beginning of *EN* 6.12: does it make any difference ‘whether [people] have *phronesis* themselves or (only) obey

¹⁰⁸ *EN* 2.2 1103b27–8 (B&C).

¹⁰⁹ *EN* 6.13 1144b25–33.

¹¹⁰ *EN* 1.4 1095b10–11, quoting Hesiod, *Works and Days* 293.

others who have it?’¹¹¹ His explicit answer to this question (quoted on p. 6 above) is that only the people who have *phronesis* can act from the right reason (*orthos logos*), i.e., perform good actions for their own sakes, which is properly virtuous acting. Thus, it seems that according to Aristotle, if one acted well from taking the ends provided by her non-rational *phantasia* as given—assuming, for the sake of argument, that it can discern good ends—one would not yet be truly excellent, or, morally virtuous, which would require also *phronesis*. It is therefore (very) unlikely, *pace* Moss, that Aristotle would imply in *EN* 6.13 that one can be morally virtuous without yet having *phronesis*.¹¹²

The final and, I think, by far the most compelling reason, however, is that Moss’ anti-rationalist interpretation about Aristotle’s theory of value cognition seems to have a serious problem with his conception of moral responsibility. Moss does not, however, discuss this problem. Perhaps she tacitly assumes that since, according to Aristotle, an adult is responsible—subject to just praise or blame—for his actions if he performs them willingly (*hekousion*),¹¹³ and since the voluntariness of an action does not require it’s being (rationally) desired,¹¹⁴ one could be responsible for one’s

¹¹¹ *EN* 6.12 1143b30-32.

¹¹² Recently, also Moss seems to have noticed the weakness of her analogy. In Moss 2014a, she admits that a rationalist interpreter ‘has to hand a much more substantive explanation [than an anti-rationalist] of *phronesis*’ difference to and superiority from cleverness [*deinotes*]: *phronesis*, she can say, *is what gives one right end*’ (Moss 2014a, p. 230, cf. fn. 45 above for Berti’s alternative interpretation). Thus, she now says that ‘it is reason’s,’ i.e. not only *phantasia*’s, ‘job to grasp what one’s character has fixed a goal and also recognise it as a goal.’ (p. 223) ‘This means,’ according to her, that desire obeys reason in the way that “someone obeys another when she says ‘I want *F* things, but I do not know what kinds of things are really *F*, and so I do not know if I want *x*, *y* or *z*, therefore I will defer to the counsel of my wise parent, friend or teacher.” (p. 239) These modifications prevent Aristotle’s division of soul in *EN* 1.13 or his insistence for the necessity of *phronesis* for virtue in *EN* 6.13 from posing problems to Moss’ interpretation. Even her modified interpretation, according to which non-rational habituation determines whether one wants e.g. *F* things or something else (p. 233), is, however, vulnerable to the problem with moral responsibility that I shall introduce.

¹¹³ Willingly performed, or, voluntary, actions are actions that elicit ‘praise or blame’, i.e., are subject to moral responsibility (*EN* 3.1 1109b34–5). In order to be voluntary, clarifies Aristotle, the action has to be up to us (*eph’ hemin*) and not performed in ignorance (*EE* 2.9 1225b9). Some interpreters (e.g. Destre 2012) think that being up to us means that the agent should have had an opportunity to act otherwise; some others (e.g. Everson 1990) stress that for an action to be called the agent’s own, it is not necessary that she could have acted otherwise. However, whatever one thinks about the correct interpretation of *eph’ hemin*, and the applicability of ‘could have acted otherwise’ -condition to Aristotle, that does not affect my thesis of the necessity of *prohairesis* for moral responsibility.

¹¹⁴ *EE* 2.7 1223b29–38: ‘we do many things voluntarily without anger or desire [...] it remains then to consider whether acting from rational desire and voluntary acting are the same [...] but no one

actions even if one chose them non-rationally, by imagining them as pleasant. Such an assumption would, however, be mistaken. For Aristotle evidently thinks that voluntariness does not make an action morally assessable.¹¹⁵ In *EN*, the philosopher also says that both small children and animals act voluntarily,¹¹⁶ but are not responsible for their actions, unlike adults.¹¹⁷ Hence humans must achieve something in their moral development that animals cannot achieve, which renders them responsible for their voluntary actions. The most obvious candidate for this achievement would be developing a capability to *choose* what to do, independently of one's non-rational *phantasia* or any non-rational desires—this is, rational choice, or, *prohairesis*. Although Aristotle does not mention *prohairesis* while discussing just praise and blame in *EN*, he recognises that moral responsibility needs it in *EE*:

Since virtue and vice and the acts that spring from them are respectively praised or blamed -for we do not give praise or blame for what is due to necessity or change or nature, but only for what we ourselves are causes of [...] it is clear that virtue and vice have to do with matters where the man himself is the source and cause of his acts. We must then ascertain of what actions he is himself the source and cause. Now, we all admit that of acts that are voluntary and done from the choice [*prohairesis*] of each man he is the cause, but of involuntary acts he is not himself the cause; and all that he does from choice, he does voluntarily.¹¹⁸

Above passage establishes that *prohairesis* allows us to regard a person as the cause of his actions, and thus responsible of them. According to Aristotle in *EN* 3.5, *prohairesis* is realised 'when discerning (*krinein*) with deliberation, we choose according to our rational desire'.¹¹⁹ Thus, a choice of action made without antecedent deliberation, and the rational discernment of an end to be desired, could not be *prohairesis*. This being the case, it would be impossible for one to become responsible for his actions in the light of Moss' anti-rationalist interpretation.

rationally desires what he thinks bad, but acts so [voluntarily] in the state of *akrasia* [...] it is therefore clear the voluntary then is not action from [even rational] desire [...].

¹¹⁵ One might think that so-called mixed actions show this already: When a captain (*EN* 3.1 1110a8-11) has to throw cargo away from his ship so as to save it from sinking, this does not justify blaming him of losing the cargo, despite he threw it away voluntarily, as he could have chosen not to throw it.

¹¹⁶ *EN* 3.2 1111b8.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle claims that a mark (*semeion*) of morally responsible agents is that their actions are subject to legal punishments (*EN* 3.1 1109b31-5), which is of course not the case with animals or children.

¹¹⁸ *EE* 2.6 1223a9-19. Translated by Solomon (1995). 'Excellence' and 'badness' replaced with 'virtue' and 'vice.'

¹¹⁹ *EN* 3.3 1113a11-12. Few lines before this definition, in 3.3 1113a6, Aristotle says that *prohairesis* occurs 'in the ruling part of soul', i.e. in the rational part. I have indicated this in the square brackets.

Assuming that habituation to virtue is a non-rational process and, moreover, that the discernment of ends is a form of non-rational cognition, *phantasia*, which operates by associating the sensations of pleasure and pain with concepts, and synthesising the mental pictures of the most desirable ends on the basis of these associations, we could not genuinely choose our ends, and actions. It would thus be unexplainable why we consider ourselves to be responsible for our actions, and justifiably so according to Aristotle. Since the rationalist interpretation gives us a way to credit the philosopher with a justification of our moral responsibility unlike Moss' anti-rationalist interpretation, we have a presumptive reason for taking Aristotle to think that discerning good ends involves the activity of the rational part of soul. When we consider this conclusion together with our earlier considerations against Moss' interpretation, we have, I think, a presumptive case for interpreting Aristotle as a rationalist, one who thinks that reason is needed in discerning what is good.

1.4 THE RATIONAL DISCERNMENT OF GOOD ENDS

We have concluded that discerning good ends calls for the activity of reason. As *EN* 3.3 has taught us, the element of reason that Aristotle calls *phronesis* does not, however, discern good ends. For deliberation is the activity of *phronesis* and we do not deliberate about ends. It therefore falls to one's non-deliberative thinking (*nous*) to cognise good ends. Although Aristotle never openly states that *nous* cognises good ends, we have seen (on p. 25) the philosopher indicate such cognition in *EN* 6.11, in which he attributes discerning the first principles (*archai*) of deliberation—that is, the ends we desire to realise—to *nous*. Rationalist interpreters disagree, however, how exactly *nous* grasps the ends of moral deliberation, that is, good actions: whether it shows a mental picture of ideal life, in which certain actions appear as good, or perhaps only recognises that a good action is a good end for moral deliberation, but lets our situational understanding to determine which action is good.

The so-called Grand End interpretation, which assumes that *nous* discerns an end as good by recognising it as making a certain contribution to our *eudaimonia*, has traditionally promoted the former answer. On this interpretations which principal

textual support we will review shortly below, *nous* intuitively grasps the ‘blueprint’ of *eudaimonia*, the picture of all individual good ends that make up the whole human good. E.g., ‘I need contemplation, healthy nutrition, and socialising *etc.* in order to realise *eudaimonia*’. Moral virtue is manifested in actions and in choices of action, and the above picture, the Grand End interpretation suggests, is always the starting point for the process of reaching and executing a good choice (*prohairesthai*), i.e., for moral deliberation.¹²⁰ A virtuous person has the blueprint of good life entirely right, a non-virtuous person doesn’t. According to a more recent, particularist interpretation,¹²¹ this model is, however, both unrealistic and never explicitly supported by Aristotle. It suggests that instead of the Grand End, one’s *nous* could grasp only a ‘formal’ conception of the end—that a good action is a good end—and then one has to figure out what particular action would be good in a particular situation with different intellectual abilities such as *phronesis*. The particularist interpretation thus proposes that a person does not have to have a comprehensive picture of the demands of *eudaimonia* in his mind before he can morally deliberate.

Let us begin to assess the merits of these rival interpretations, starting with the Grand End interpretation. A representative version of it can be found in John Cooper’s work. According to him, the intuition of the demands of *eudaimonia* (*to telos*) presented by *nous* is the starting point of all successful moral deliberation. As Aristotle clearly states in *EN* 3.5 1114b15: ‘whatever [people] accomplish can be ascribed to (*anapherontes*) [their intuition of *to telos*].’ Moral deliberation, thinks Cooper, is about how to realise the components of this intuition, particular good ends, in a particular situation.¹²² He has argued so on the basis of *An. Post.* 2.19—at the end of which Aristotle concludes, ‘it is (non-deliberative) thinking (*nous*) that apprehends first principles (*archai*)’¹²³—which Cooper reads in the light of Aristotle’s other contention, in *EN* 1.4, about the pursuit of *eudaimonia* being the

¹²⁰ *EN* 2.4 1106b36 makes the centrality of deliberation to moral virtue clear: in that passage, Aristotle calls moral virtue *hexis prohairetike*, ‘the state characterised by choosing well’.

¹²¹ McDowell (1980 and 2007) and Broadie (1991) are classic examples of the particularist interpretation; Price (2011) is a more recent extensive particularist interpretation.

¹²² Cooper (1974) presents a summary of his interpretation on pp. 85–6.

¹²³ *An. Post.* 2.19 100b12. Similar claims in 1.2 71b16–17 and 1.3 72b18–20. Cited in *ibid.* p. 65.

first principle of our acting.¹²⁴ Similar argumentation is typical of all supporters of the Grand End interpretation, not only to Cooper. What makes Cooper's version of the interpretation especially representative is, however, that it managed to avoid a certain problematic implication that marring many earlier Grand End interpretations.

The problem emerges once we notice that, since the blueprint of the demands of *eudaimonia* is always discerned by *nous* in advance of actual deliberation, it must show one all his good ends—for example, contemplation, health and socialising *etc.*—without offering him any possibility of deliberating about any of them. The problem with this view is that if the discernment of good ends is rational, but outside the scope of rational deliberation, it seems that a person could not rationally choose his ends. But, as we concluded in the previous section, Aristotle thinks he *should* choose them in order to be responsible for his actions.¹²⁵ Remarkably, the problem seems very similar to the problem that I showed Moss' anti-rationalist interpretation of moral cognition to have with Aristotle's account of responsibility for actions.¹²⁶

So as to avoid the problem, Cooper famously argued that Aristotle might not in fact think that we do not deliberate about our ends *at all*, but only that 'we never deliberate about ends *as such*, but we may do so when considering them as available means to higher ends'.¹²⁷ Consider the passage of *EN* 3.3 again: '[w]e deliberate not about ends but about the things towards ends. For a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall persuade, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does any one else deliberate about his end [...]'. Aristotle here says that a doctor may not deliberate about whether the end of medicine is health, a statesman whether the end of statesmanship is justice *etc.*, but this situation does not prevent them from deliberating what they should do in order to realise the correct conception of *eudaimonia* in their lives—which is a far higher end than health or justice, since it is the end of human life. Therefore it does not have to be the case that *nous* presents us every end that constitutes our

¹²⁴ *EN* 1.4 1095a15–20.

¹²⁵ See p 40 above

¹²⁶ See pp. 40-1 above.

¹²⁷ See Cooper 1975 p. 18; italics are Cooper's own. Many later Grand End-interpreters (Kraut 1989, Irwin 1990 and 2007, Richardson-Lear 2004) have approved this argument.

eudaimonia without us having the need to deliberate about what to consider good; *nous* can only enable us to see that *eudaimonia* consists in certain general ends, such as contemplation, health and socialising etc., but still leaves room for deliberating what particular actions we ought to consider as good to realise those general ends.

Therefore we can choose our actions, but in order to be responsible for them, we would also need to be able to justify or revise our conception of *eudaimonia* as such; otherwise we could not be justifiably praised on account of our pursuing, e.g., contemplation as a part of that conception. However, Cooper has also argued that even if the blueprint of *eudaimonia* results from non-deliberative *nous*, this does not have mean that it cannot be justified or revised by deliberation. He writes: ‘Aristotle holds both that the [first] principles of sciences [one of which is ethics] are known intuitively, by *nous*, and they can be established by discursive dialectical argument’.¹²⁸ This is possible because, as Cooper points out, dialectic is a different type of reasoning from deliberation. Dialectic aims at establishing some definition, e.g. that *eudaimonia* includes contemplation, by examining arguments for and against various alternative conceptions of *eudaimonia*, whereas deliberation aims at reaching a good choice of action on the basis of the blueprint of the demands of *eudaimonia*. When we deliberate about what to do here and now, we do not simultaneously deliberate about the contents of the blueprint, and when we use dialectic to define the components of good life, we do not deliberate about what to do, but study arguments. Therefore we would remain responsible for our actions even if we would take our ends as given by *nous* while deliberating about what to do.

Although Cooper’s version of the Grand End interpretation seems to be able to tackle the challenge posed by Aristotle’s views on moral responsibility, it might not, however, be compatible with what Aristotle says in *EN* 6.11 1143a35–b5. In that passage, quoted below, the philosopher differentiates *nous* in ethics (*nous en tais praktikais*) from the *nous* of *A. Po.* 2.19 that intuits the first principles, and which he now labels as *nous kata tas apodexeis*. For the former *nous* pertains to the last things (*ta eschata*) in deliberation, to actions, and its conception of first principles is not intuited, unlike that of the latter, but arises from the apprehension of particulars:

¹²⁸ Cooper 1975, p. 67.

Thought (*nous*) is concerned with the last things in both directions, for [what grasps] both the first principles and the last things is thought not reason (*logos*). That is, on the one hand (*men*), the thought that pertains to demonstrations (*kata tas apodexeis*) concerns the unchanging first principles; on the other hand (*de*), thought in the matters of action (*en tais praktikais*) concerns also the last particular thing that admits of being otherwise, that is, the minor premise. For these last things are the principles or starting-points because of which one acts: the universals arise from particulars (*ek ton kath' hekasta gar ta katholou*). Of these one must have perception (*aisthesis*), and this perception is thought.¹²⁹

Above passage seems to be incompatible with Cooper's interpretation on account of implying that we construct our moral universals—one of which is our picture of *eudaimonia*—through deliberation, not by dialectical reasoning, as Cooper proposes. Cooper has, however, made an attempt to circumvent this threat. He thinks we can assume that *nous* about the matters of action (*en tais praktikais*, i.e. *nous praktikos*) is not a distinct aspect of *nous* in technical sense, but only a way of speaking about 'perceptual knowledge (i.e. true beliefs) of various types of things'—a competency to see, for example, that such and such food is healthy.¹³⁰ For apart from its strict sense as the thinking that presents first principles, which Cooper thinks is the sense in which *nous* presents the blueprint of the demands of *eudaimonia*, the word *nous* also has a non-technical, colloquial sense as true believing in general. So Aristotle might not be talking here about two aspects of *nous*, but about a proper and a qualified sense of the concept. Aristotle's sentence about universals arising from particulars may describe only how perception can generate universal beliefs—e.g. 'that serious philosophers tend to be old'—although *nous* proper could have no involvement with this process, because it is concerned only with the first principles, which cannot be generated by perception, but only defined through dialectic.¹³¹

It seems, however, that the above reading treats Aristotle's concepts selectively: it puts a great stress on the distinction between the *nous* in the proper sense and the supposedly colloquial notion of *nous* as true believing in general—which is not treated as an aspect of proper *nous*—while not registering that for Aristotle, 'universals,' which 'arise from particulars' with which *nous praktikos* is concerned,

¹²⁹ *EN* 6.11 1143a35–b5. On the basis of (B&C). I have translated *nous* as thought instead of intellect and *aisthesis* as perception instead of discernment, which I take to be *krisis*.

¹³⁰ Cooper 1975 p. 38.

¹³¹ Cooper 1975 p. 38–9.

may well include even first principles such as *eudaimonia*. Therefore the two concepts of *nous* do not have to refer to *nous* in the proper and colloquial senses, but to two aspects of one and the same *nous*. Even Aristotle's phrase 'on the one hand, *nous* (*men*) [...] pertains to demonstrations (*de*) on the other hand, *nous* [...] concerns the last particular gives us the impression that *nous* has two, equally 'proper' aspects. Although proper *nous* grasps first principles, Aristotle never says that the same *nous* could not also grasp the last particulars—the Grand End interpretation only assumes so. That is, he may think that we could come to discern the first principles—e.g. what *eudaimonia* is—through perceiving particulars.¹³²

The passage in *EN* 6.11, 1143a35–b5, has now revealed a gap in the justifications of the Grand End interpretation, which, as we can see, cannot neatly accommodate the claims of the passage—even with Cooper's improvements. Although Cooper is probably right with regard to the possibility of justifying the demands of *eudaimonia* by dialectic, it is, however, not evident that one has to always have the blueprint of *eudaimonia* available before deliberation. That is, it might not be, as Cooper argued, that always before a virtuous person begins moral deliberation, whatever the situation, his *nous* discerns that his end is *eudaimonia*, and that *eudaimonia* is, for example, a certain composite of ends such as contemplation, health, and socialising; then he deliberates so as to discern which actions would optimally contribute to the realisation of these ends in his situation. Provided that *nous* has two aspects, one that is about universals and another pertaining to particulars, it could be that the former aspect formally cognises that 'a good action is a good end', and the agent then has to figure out, with the latter aspect, what acting would be good in his circumstances.

Since, according to this particularist interpretation, a person does not choose his particular good ends on the basis of any blueprint of the demands of *eudaimonia*, but through perceiving the particular moral demands of his situation, that person might not need to appeal to a conception of *eudaimonia* before he has a need to justify his choice of action. And it might be that, only when he has to demonstrate why he acts as he acts, or, tell to a student of ethics why he should act in a certain way, needs he

¹³² Reeve (1992), p. 58, makes this suggestion.

articulate that he has been acting on the basis of the intuition (*nous*) that *eudaimonia* is the end of his acting—the intuition to which everything that he does can be ascribed, as we have seen *EN* 3.5 1114b15 (quoted on p. 42 above) to say. Insofar as ‘*eudaimonia* is acting well (*eupraxia*)’, as Aristotle states,¹³³ it is realised once the moral demands of situations are met, regardless of whether one consciously attempts to realise it or not. This might be the inspiration for Aristotle’s statement in *EN* 2.4, which we have studied on p. 23 above, i.e. that although a virtuous person acts knowingly, acting knowingly is not important for the virtuousness of his acting.

Although it might not thus be necessary for even a virtuous person to consciously begin moral deliberation from a precise blueprint of the demands of *eudaimonia*, he is nevertheless able to appeal to *eudaimonia* whenever he needs to justify his actions, and could correctly identify what activity would be good in his situation. In order to actualise his capacity of deliberation, a virtuous person would only need to identify, however, which action counts as good in the situation at hand. Providing an agent with an idea of what action to perform in a particular situation, supplying him with a ‘minor premise’, might also be the task of *nous*—besides giving us the intuition of *eudaimonia* as the end—the task that pertains to particulars according to *EN* 6.11 1143a35–b5. Since the minor premise, remarks Aristotle, ‘admits being otherwise’, the action that *nous* identifies as worth performing in one particular situation may not be a good action in another. Admitting the particularity of good actions does not, however, preclude the philosopher from concluding that ‘universals arise’ from particular identifications. By this conclusion, we do not have to take him to only mean that the experience of identifying good actions can help us to construct rules of thumb—which are universals only in qualified sense, as being true for the most part and not universally—but also that a certain proper, unchangeable universal, i.e. the conception of *eudaimonia* can derive from it. Aristotle may think that only once a person has come to identify a good action in his particular situation can he come to understand what would realise *eudaimonia* in his situation: performing that action.

¹³³ *EN* 1.4 1095a18–20 and 1.8 1098b20–22, in which Aristotle describes *eudaimonia* as *eu zen*, to live well, and as, *eu pratein*, to act well. Natali 2014 remarks on p. 188 that according to some modern interpreters these concepts are identical, but in fact *eupraxia* describes the content of a well-lived life.

A recent proponent of the particularist interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral cognition, Anthony Price, describes Aristotelian moral deliberation as follows:

The virtuous person finds some feature of the situation salient in seeing it as inviting or demanding some practical response (where "seeing" signifies not just discernment, but also noetic apprehension). This attraction is associated with his discrimination of some practical option as looking likely to achieve something worthwhile in the circumstances. The application of a concept is accompanied by the focusing of a [rational] desire. Once there is a question to be asked, "How am I to achieve such-and-such an end?" deliberation can come into play [...] noetic apprehension proposes a provisional end to be achieved in the context; deliberation, aided by further discernments and appreciations as appropriate, then explores whether it can be acceptably realized in the context; there finally emerges a judgement yielding a choice of doing this for the sake of that.¹³⁴

In this passage, Price discusses the operation of practical reason (*phronesis*), which Aristotle characterises as involving excellent deliberation (*euboulia*)—deliberation in which all premises and conclusions are true—as well as grasping ends correctly and commanding one to act well.¹³⁵ If Price were right about what *phronesis* being excellence in moral deliberation implies, it should 'discriminate' which actions are required to realise *eudaimonia* in a particular situation. Price suggests that such discrimination is necessary for the initial 'noetic apprehension' of the minor premise, or good action, because sometimes the action that *nous* initially perceives as good might not be good in the end, although 'the cases where, though wisely selected, it has ultimately to be discarded or amended must be the exception; in most cases, the right goal and the initial goal are identical.'¹³⁶ Despite this, he does not give any concrete examples to support this conclusion. Presumably Price has in mind, e.g., a case in which one identifies with his *nous* that it would be good to give a present to someone, but then finds out, thanks to his *phronesis*, that he does not happen to have money for that present. The possibility of any subsequent need to amend the initial noetic apprehension of good action implies, concludes Price, that any such apprehension 'must be adopted with a reservation', that is, subject to deliberation

¹³⁴ Price 2011, p. 226

¹³⁵ Aristotle gives this characterization in *EN* 6.9 1142b30–3, just before the claim that *phronesis* is a correct conception of the end (for the interpretation of this claim, see fn. 45 on p. 22 above). For the claim about *phronesis* commanding us to act, see *EN* 6.10 1143a8–9, discussed in section 2.5 below.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230

‘upon how it can be realized in context’¹³⁷—a task for which *phronesis* is needed.

Although the particularist interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of moral deliberation may seem now more realistic than the Grand End interpretation, I think, however, that Price’s attempt to provide a particularist explanation for the role of *nous* and *phronesis* in deliberation needs some revision so as to be also faithful to the philosopher’s text. For in *An. Post.* 2.19 Aristotle states ‘*nous* is always right’.¹³⁸ Apart from showing the inadequacy of the standard translation of ‘thought’ (or ‘intellect’ or ‘intuition’) for *nous*, the philosopher’s strict statement also makes clear that that noetic apprehension never needs further revision. One could of course think, with certain plausibility, that since Aristotle speaks of *nous* in many different senses, the statement of *An. Post.* 2.19 may not be at all applicable to the noetic apprehension of good actions. This assumption might follow from the view that the epistemology of *An. Post.* 2 is different from Aristotle’s moral epistemology in *EN*, which, however, as we will see in Chapter 3, does not seem to fit with what he says in that book.¹³⁹ However, if we thought that the role of *phronesis* in deliberation is not to be a possible *corrector* of the identifications of good actions by *nous*, but to *complement* habituation in rendering agent motivated to perform them, we would not need to question infallibility of *nous* as stated in *An. Post.* 2.19 in the context of *EN*.

We may thus think that every rational agent has enough *nous* to identify good actions—that is why they are responsible for their actions—but not every agent, for example vicious and akratic people, tends to perform those actions. The lack of sufficient moral motivation can derive from the deficient habituation of character and absence of *phronesis*. I attempt to show in the course of the next two chapters that Aristotle constructs this theory in *EN*. However, before we can engage in studying the contribution of the habituation of character and *phronesis* to moral motivation, we have to establish that people can rationally identify good actions before they are

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *An. Post.* 2.19, 100b7.

¹³⁹ See e.g. Berti 2008b, p 48, for the view that the epistemologies of *An. Post.* and *EN* differ: ‘le constant, comme nous le savons, forme aussi l’objet de la physique, sans l’empêcher d’être une véritable science, parce que la science, selon des les *Seconds Analytiques*, a pour objet aussi bien le nécessaire que le constant. [...] [Est] différente de la *phronesis*, qui est la vertu de la partie calculatrice.’ See p. 84 below, however, for the evidence that even if there were no ‘constant’ universals in ethics, ethical and other knowledge could be obtained through a very similar method.

taught and habituated to performing them. I therefore argue in the next chapter that, according to Aristotle, they can, and that he even has a concept for the aspect of *nous* that identifies good actions independently of teaching and habituation: *synesis*.

CHAPTER 2

COMING TO ACT WELL

If identifying good actions involves reason in Aristotle, as we have concluded above, then coming to desire to perform such actions when occasion presents itself cannot demand the habituation of non-rational part of soul only. It should also require cultivating reason, at least the ability to identify good actions, and probably also *phronesis*, the virtue of thought that consists in excellent deliberation and has cognitive access to the correct conception of good. In *EN* 2.1, Aristotle states, however, that moral virtues (*ethikes arêtes*) result from habituation, as opposed to the virtues of thought (*dianoetikes aretês*), such as *phronesis* that com from *teaching*: ‘[b]oth the birth and increase of the virtue of thought results from teaching (*didaskalia*), hence it requires experience and time, whereas moral virtue is the result of habit (*ethos*)’.¹⁴⁰ Aristotle seems to stress also the non-rationality of moral virtue:

[B]y doing just things we become just, by doing temperate things, we become temperate; and by doing courageous things, courageous.¹⁴¹ [...] By acting in dangerous situations and by becoming habituated to fearing or being brave, some become courageous and others cowardly—and it is the same for things concerning desires or anger [...] In brief, the states (*hexeis*) come to be from like activities.¹⁴²

The above claims may seem to contradict my conclusion in Chapter 1 about the necessity of rational abilities to moral virtue. These anti-rationalist looking claims should, however, not be taken as a definitive summary of Aristotle’s theory of moral development, but its starting point, as he adds qualifications to these initial claims.

¹⁴⁰ *EN* 2.1 1103a15–16 (B&C), ‘intellectual virtue’ replaced with ‘the virtue of thought’.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 1103a35–b1 (B&C), ‘moderate’ (*sophrones*) replaced with ‘temperate’.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 1103b21–22. See *EN* 2.5 for Aristotle’s identification of virtues with states (*hexeis*)

Having asserted that moral virtue comes from habitation in *EN* 2.1, the philosopher specifies that habituation is *only the first stage of* moral development: ‘moral virtues we come to have by first (*proton*) engaging in the like activities’.¹⁴³ If habituation is first, then something must come after it. Thus, moral virtue cannot result *exclusively* from habituation. Aristotle also states that habituation needs a teacher (*didaskalos*).¹⁴⁴ This concept does not signify a person who *only* supervises habituation, but he is a teacher of intellectual disciplines, such as philosophy.¹⁴⁵ Therefore it seems that some teaching, although it is normally reserved for the virtues of thought, must also be needed for acquiring a finely-habituated character.

The question that arises now, however, is why Aristotle then seems to think that habituation and some teaching are both needed for developing fine habits—why he adds such a qualification to the dichotomy he presents in the quoted passage of *EN* 2.1? Since moral virtue, to return once again to *EN* 6.13, comes only with acquiring *phronesis*, which complements the finely-habituated character, one needs teaching to develop it, insofar as *phronesis* is a virtue of thought. A finely-habituated person (*epieikes*) does not, however, need to have virtues of thought, so, if teaching were needed *only* for developing *phronesis* and other virtues of thought, then it would not be needed for his habituation. If we must thus allow that teaching may not cultivate *only* the virtues of thought, but also character, there remains, I think, two following possibilities for the developmental role of teaching in the habituation of character.

First, Aristotle may consider that while habituation as such fosters the motivation to act well, a moral teacher is needed to teach an unhabituated child which actions to perform as good. On this model of moral development, teaching would be needed for developing the ability to identify good actions, which success in habituation presupposes, although not for moral habituation (performing good actions) as such. *Second*, alternatively, coming to be able to identify good actions may not require teaching about which actions are good: the child can acquire the ability to identify

¹⁴³ Ibid. 1103a32.

¹⁴⁴ See *EN* 2.1 1103b13–17, quoted on p. 55 below.

¹⁴⁵ Liddell and Scott (1940) define *didaskalos* as ‘teacher’ or ‘master’ and (omitting Aristotle) note that Plato used it when speaking of (intellectual) schools in *Alc.* 1.109d, 110b, *Gorg.* 514c and *Prot* 326c.

good actions as a result of experiencing social life. According to this, alternative developmental model, teaching would contribute to ability to justify those actions.

Among interpreters, there has been more support for the former model, at least since Myles Burnyeat's seminal 1980 paper *Aristotle on Learning to Be Good*, in which Aristotle is presented as having a worked out theory of moral development for the first time in Anglophone scholarship.¹⁴⁶ I want to argue, however, that the latter is nevertheless more likely to be Aristotle's model: the ability to identify good actions is not a result of being taught them but comes through experience. Recognising this will enable us to see, I hope to show by the end of the chapter, that Aristotle's *synesis*, the intellectual ability he describes in *EN* 6.10—a surprisingly little-studied chapter of *EN*—often translated as 'comprehension' or 'understanding' and considered but an aspect of *phronesis*, refers in fact to the experience-based apprehension of good actions. Maybe the *EN* 6.10 has received such scarce scholarly attention due to the fact that Burnyeat's interpretation on the place of teaching and habituation in the development of fine habits may easily lead one to ignore *synesis*.

According to Burnyeat's interpretation, the textual basis of which I will review below, at the beginning of one's (presumably a child) moral development, the teacher of *EN* 2.1 (presumably a parent) should teach him which actions are good. This enables the child to come to identify good actions, and to begin to learn through performing those actions that the goodness of an action makes it enjoyable, more enjoyable than any alternative action, such that the experience brings the child to be motivated to perform those actions. Although moral development is grounded on discerning which actions are good—the actions that are taught as good—a moral learner is motivated to perform the good actions only through coming to perceive that they are more pleasant than alternative actions. On this interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral development, the teaching that the philosopher speaks of in *EN* 1.4—the moral teaching that one can receive only once one has fine habits—should refer to attending lectures in philosophy, which, Burnyeat suggests,

¹⁴⁶ Reeve (1992), pp. 51-4, Herman (1989), Whiting (2002), p. 173, Lorenz (2009), p. 190, and Moss (2012), pp.37-8, are almost uncritical towards Burnyeat; they all attempt to complement him rather than challenging him. As far as I know, only Curzer (2012) argues in favour the latter possibility.

are for *phronesis*. This would be quite different to the teaching mentioned at the beginning of *EN* 2.1, which only involves a parent telling his or her child which actions are good, and which, unlike the former, is needed for acquiring fine habits.

I will argue in the course of this chapter that Burnyeat's interpretation is, however, likely to be mistaken: first, because it—as Howard Curzer shows—does not fit with certain of Aristotle's explicit view about the minimal cognitive requirements for receiving moral teaching, and the relation between pleasure and virtuous acting, and second, because, as I will show, neither can it accommodate Aristotle's account of responsibility for character. I will therefore suggest that a parent's main task in initiating a child's moral development might not be to teach good actions to the child, but to punish him when he acts wrongly, and let the child learn to identify good actions on the basis of his own experience of social life. That is, instead of teaching, the ability to identify good actions may come primarily from social life. Hence also the main role of teaching in the development of fine habits might be to improve one's motivation to act well. This task might not fall, *pace* Burnyeat, to habituation alone. Aristotle may consider, I show further, the experience of social life to be a sufficient basis for acquiring the ability to identify good actions, because he thinks that any child will come to face the moral opinions of other people, and find out what they think about certain actions, and the experience of facing such opinions will inevitably enable a child to identify good actions through reflecting upon other people's opinions. In *EN* 6.10, which I study at the end of this chapter, Aristotle describes *synesis* as the capacity enabling us to identify good actions on this basis.

I will thus conclude this chapter by suggesting that *synesis*, since it arises from the experience of social life, and does not presuppose that we are correctly taught which actions are good, can account for our responsibility for our actions. It would enable a young person to choose to be habituated into acting well or not—the choice that Burnyeat's interpretation, which places the responsibility of identifying good actions to our teachers, does not allow, but that moral responsibility presupposes.

2.1 ARISTOTLE ON HABITUATION AND TEACHING

We can now study the principal textual basis for any interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral development—that is, *EN* 2.1. In the beginning of that section, from which we have already seen a brief quotation on p. 50 above, Aristotle argues that the virtues of thought and moral virtues are developed in two apparently different ways. Let me now quote the section more extensively than on the previous occasion.

Both the coming-into-being and increase of intellectual virtue results mostly from teaching (*didaskalia*)—hence it requires experience and time—whereas moral virtue is the result of habit (*ethos*), and so it is that moral virtue (*ethika arête*) got its name by slight alteration of the term habit. It is also clear, as a result, that none of the moral virtues are present in us by nature, since nothing that exists by nature is habituated to be other than it is. For example, a stone, because it goes downward by nature, could not be habituated to go upward, not even if one habituates it by throwing it ten thousand times. [...] Neither by nature, therefore, nor contrary to nature, are the virtues present; they are instead present in us who are of nature to receive them, and are ready though habit.¹⁴⁷

The virtue of thought comes from teaching, but moral virtue comes from habituation. Since moral virtue comes from habituation (*ethismos*), it cannot be 'present in us by nature', because natural properties, as the above example about a stone shows, cannot be changed by habituation. However, since also sensual capacities such as hearing or seeing are present in us by nature, Aristotle separates moral virtue also from those capacities: 'it is not a result of hearing or seeing many times that we come to have those sensual capacities [...]. But virtues we come to have by engaging into activities first, as in the case of skills as well'.¹⁴⁸ After having established that moral virtue is neither taught nor present in us by nature, and yet nor is it a sensual capacity but is acquired in the same way as skill, i.e. by habituation, Aristotle presents three analogues to support his conclusion:

1. By building houses, people become house-builders, by playing the cithara, they become cithara-players; so, too, then, by doing just things we become just, by doing temperate things, we become temperate; and by doing courageous things courageous.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ *EN* 2.1 1103a14–16 (B&C).

¹⁴⁸ *EN* 2.1 103a26–31.

¹⁴⁹ *EN* 2.1 1103a33–b2 (R).

2. Further, as a result and on the account of the same things, every virtue both comes into being and is destroyed, as it is similarly the case also with a skill. For it is a result of playing the cithara that both good and bad cithara-players arise, and analogously with house-builders and all the rest.¹⁵⁰

3. If this were not the case, there would be no need of a teacher, but everyone would come into being already good or bad. So too in the case of virtues: by doing things in our interactions with people, some of us become just, some unjust and by doing things in terrifying circumstances and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, some of us become courageous, others cowards.¹⁵¹

The first analogue states that becoming virtuous is like acquiring a skill. The second analogue adds to this that the process of acquiring a skill can also result in a deficient skill. Therefore the habituation of character—since it is analogous to acquiring a skill—makes people become either virtuous or vicious. By implying that non-habituated people are neither virtuous nor vicious, and that both good and bad craftsmanship results from habituation, Aristotle may mean that if people have not chosen how to habituate their characters, they cannot be morally assessed. They are neither good nor bad—just as those who have never had an opportunity to choose to learn to play cithara or build houses are not responsible for their performance should they to play or build. For despite Aristotle does not mention the concept of choice (*prohairesis*) here, he regards it as the condition of moral responsibility in *EN* 3.5¹⁵²

The third analogue creates a possibility for interpreting Aristotle to think that, as does Burnyeat, that teaching enables a child to identify good actions, and habituation the motivation to act well. In that analogue, Aristotle states that, just as with any skill, ‘so too in the case of virtues’ there is a need for a teacher (*didaskalos*). But straight after that claim he repeats his earlier claim that we become virtuous by habituation. So, although we acquire moral virtue by habituation that is opposed to the teaching, which is reserved for the virtues of thought (according to the beginning of *EN* 2.1), habituation nevertheless involves a teacher. To avoid contradiction, Aristotle must therefore refer to two different kinds of teaching in *EN* 2.1 with the same concept: probably, teaching for the virtues of thought, such as *phronesis*, in the beginning of the chapter, and teaching a child good actions in the third analogue.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 1103b7–11 (R).

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 1 1103b13–17 (R).

¹⁵² See pp. 39-41 above for more discussion and textual references.

2.2 BURNYEAT'S INTERPRETATION OF EARLY MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Burnyeat begins his interpretation by stating, in line with the conclusions reached in the previous section, that, according to Aristotle, 'you', if you are a child about to begin developing your character, need 'someone around to *tell* you what is good and just'.¹⁵³ Burnyeat's interpretation, that also the third analogue of *EN* 2.1 seems to support, assumes that Aristotle explains the task of the teacher in early moral development in the following passage of *EN* 1.4. Let us quote Burnyeat's translation:

For while one must begin from what is familiar, this may be taken in two ways: some *things are familiar to us*, others *without qualification*. Presumably, then, we should begin from things familiar to us. This is the reason why one should have been well brought up in good habits [*ethe*] if the one is going to listen adequately to lectures about things good and just, and in general about political (social) affairs. For the beginning (starting-point) [*arche*] is 'the that' [*to hoti*] and if this is sufficiently apparent to a man, he will not in addition have a need for 'the because' [*to dioti*].¹⁵⁴

This passage is the only place in *EN* in which Aristotle uses the terms *to hoti* and *to dioti*. These concepts, however, also feature for example in *Met.* and *An. Post.* 2.¹⁵⁵ Burnyeat does not, however, consider any possible connections between those works—which I will attempt to chart in Chapter 3—and the concepts that he translates (literally) as 'the that' and 'the because' in *EN* 1.4. Instead, Burnyeat relies on the ancient commentators, Aspasius, Eustratius and Heliodorus, and on the basis of their comments, he takes 'the that' and 'the because' to mean this in *EN* 1.4:¹⁵⁶

What is "the that"? The ancient commentators agreed that Aristotle has in mind knowledge about actions in accordance with virtues; *these actions are the things familiar to us from which we must start and what we know about them is that they are good and just*. [...] That being so, if the student is to have "the that" for which the doctrines of Aristotle's lectures provide the explanatory "because" [...] *the emphasis had better be on his knowing of specific actions that they are good and just in specific circumstances* [...] moral advice will come to him in fairly general terms.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Burnyeat 1980 p. 74.

¹⁵⁴ *EN* 1.4 1095b4–8, quoted in Burnyeat 1980, p. 71.

¹⁵⁵ See *Met* 1.1 980b24–981b7 and *An. Post.* 2.13 97b15–20.

¹⁵⁶ 'So Aspasius, Eustratius, Heliodorus *ad loc.*' (Burnyeat 1980, p. 88 n. 3). However, in Ch. 3, I will question the assumption that the epistemological theories of *Met.* and *An. Post.* are not relevant to *EN*.

¹⁵⁷ Burnyeat 1980, pp. 71–72 (*italics mine*).

For Burnyeat, ‘the that’ is ability to identify good actions in specific situations—the things familiar to us (see *italics* on the passage of EN 1.4)—‘the because’ to explain why they are good.¹⁵⁸ In the lines in *italics* in the above quotation, Burnyeat seems to assume, moreover, that the teacher that Aristotle thinks habituation to involve in the third analogue of EN 2.1 has the task of teaching a child that certain actions are good, or, providing him with the knowledge of ‘the that’. Although Burnyeat does not explain what this teaching pedagogically involves, it seems to require at least that the teacher should tell the child which actions are good in which contexts; since good actions are particular, he should presumably give the child rules of thumb instead of strict principles. Once the child knows the good actions ‘in fairly general terms’, presumably, can roughly discriminate between moral contexts (e.g. whether one is at family dinner, workplace or with friends *etc.*) and good acting in each general context, he has ‘the that’, and is generally able to identify what he should do in order to eventually become the finely-habituated person whom he wants to become.

Although acting well for the sake of pleasure is insufficient motivation for moral virtue, as we concluded in Chapter 1, the prospect of pleasure, Burnyeat assumes, is nevertheless what motivates a child to improve his character until he or she is finely habituated.¹⁵⁹ Burnyeat thinks that Aristotle presents such a view in these passages:

In EN 2.3, the philosopher states:

We must take as a sign (*semeion*) of states of character the pleasure or pain that ensues on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against the things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward. For moral virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from good ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as to both delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought, this is the right education.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Thus Aristotle’s distinction between *to hoti* and *to dioti* seems to correspond to the distinction between *true beliefs* and *knowledge* (true beliefs plus explanations for their goodness) in Plato’s *Meno*.

¹⁵⁹ See Burnyeat 1980, p. 82.

¹⁶⁰ EN 2.3 1104b3–13 (R).

In *EN* 10.9:

[T]he soul of the student (of ethics) must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth, which is to nourish the seed.¹⁶¹

In the former passage, Aristotle says that it is ‘a sign’ (*semeion*) of a temperate man that he enjoys abstaining from sensual pleasures, since if a man did not enjoy his own temperance, he would be intemperate—just as it is a sign of a courageous man that he does not feel pain in the face of terrible things. That is, a morally virtuous person enjoys acting virtuously, and that is the ‘sign’ that marks him as morally virtuous. Aristotle seems to explain later in the passage that pleasure is the sign of virtue due to the fact that people who enjoy bad instead of good actions tend to also act badly. For this reason, habituation to getting pleasure from virtuous acting is crucial for becoming virtuous. Aristotle emphasises this conclusion in the latter passage, in which he also goes on to claim that habituation to proper pleasures and pains is a necessary precondition for the successful study of ethics (and hence, also for the acquisition of full moral virtue that requires attending lectures in ethics).

For Burnyeat, these passages reveal that ‘Aristotle holds that to learn to do what is virtuous, to make it a habit or second nature to one, is among other things to learn to enjoy doing it, to come to take pleasure—appropriate pleasure—in doing it’.¹⁶² ‘Appropriate pleasure’, for which a finely-habituated person acts, argues Burnyeat, is the intrinsic pleasure of acting well (thereby echoing the motivation of a virtuous person, who performs good actions because they are good in themselves), and is thus opposed to instrumental pleasures such as ‘enjoying philosophy for the sense of power it can give’.¹⁶³ Aristotle’s justification for such a restricted conception of appropriate pleasure comes in *EN* 1.8, where he states that ‘the things pleasant to the many (*hoi polloi*) conflict with one another, because such things are not pleasant by nature’.¹⁶⁴ In the light of Aristotle’s justification, enjoying philosophy for the sake of some further end, such as the sense of power, is not an appropriate way to enjoy it,

¹⁶¹ *EN* 10.9 1179a26–31(R).

¹⁶² Burnyeat 1980, p. 177.

¹⁶³ Burnyeat 1980, p. 76.

¹⁶⁴ *EN* 1.8 1099a11.

because even some bad actions, for example persecuting philosophers—i.e. that are not enjoyable by nature—might give a sense of power to the agent. Thus, in brief, any pleasures that can result from *either* good *or* bad actions are improper for Aristotle, while only those that can result *only* from good actions are appropriate.

According to Burnyeat, a child may learn to take appropriate pleasure in acting well through habituation only: ‘the capacity for ‘noble joy and hatred’ grows from habituation [...] what you love in this sense is what you enjoy or take pleasure in’.¹⁶⁵ Although Burnyeat does not explain in his article why he thinks that, according to Aristotle, only habituation can develop a disposition to enjoy from acting well, and no teaching is needed for that, a justification for his view is not difficult to construe.

Aristotle states in *EN* 6.13 that everyone has a capacity that he calls natural virtue:

Each of the several virtues is in some way present by nature: we are just, inclined to be moderate, and are courageous and the rest, immediately from birth. [...] In both children and animals, natural virtues are present but they are manifestly harmful in the absence of thought (*nous*). [...] Just as a strong body without eyesight will end up stumbling with considerable force because it is without sight, so it is also in this case.¹⁶⁶

In above passage, natural virtue seems to refer to the potential for being virtuous possessed by everyone since birth, albeit not actualised, because not everyone develops their *nous* into moral understanding—perhaps not even into the competence to identify good actions.¹⁶⁷ Since acting virtuously is to realise the human good, by actualising our natural virtue, in acting virtuously we also fulfil our natural desire for the good.¹⁶⁸ Thus, since Aristotle also thinks, according to *EN* 7.12, that the principal source of pleasure is the satisfaction of desires, and remaining in the state in which they are satisfied, progressing towards moral virtue by acting well should inevitably

¹⁶⁵ Burnyeat 1980, pp. 77–8.

¹⁶⁶ *EN* 6.13 1144b3–8 (B&C). I think ‘inclined’ is a possibly misleading translation for *echomen*, e.g. ‘adapted’ would be more consistent, as in *EN* 3.5 1114a31–b16 Aristotle rejects that the way in which things appear to us, whether they seem good or not, depends upon our natural inclinations.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *EN* 2.1 1103a24–5 (R) ‘Neither by nature nor contrary to nature virtues arise in us; rather, *we are adapted by nature to receive them*, and are made perfect by habit.’ The passage that I have rendered in italics probably refers to natural virtue as everyone’s innate potential to become virtuous.

¹⁶⁸ See e.g. *EN* 1.1 1094a1: ‘Every skill and science, and similarly, all actions and choices seem to aim at realizing something good’. In the course of *EN* 1.4, Aristotle adds that the good realisable by acting is acting well or *eudaimonia* (while conceding that many people do not understand this connection).

bring a child pleasure by satisfying his natural desire towards the good more and more fully.¹⁶⁹ Because only acting well can fully satisfy this desire by realising the human good, Burnyeat would have here a straightforward justification for thinking that moral motivation increases only through habituation and not through teaching.

Although we could thus think that people may develop motivation to act well through habituation only, if they have already been taught to identify good actions that they can habituate themselves to enjoy, only these factors do not, however, suffice to account for the development of full moral virtue even according to Burnyeat. As Aristotle says in *Pol.* 3.4 ‘when we speak of a morally virtuous person, we mean that he has the perfect (*teleia*) virtue. Thus, it is clearly possible to be a good person without having the virtue that constitutes the virtuous person’.¹⁷⁰ Taking the step from fine habits to moral virtue, ‘the final correcting and perfecting of the that’,¹⁷¹ in Burnyeat’s words, is developing the firm motivation to act well, because acting well is good, not only because it is pleasant. Commanding one to act from this right reason is the task of the virtue of thought—*phronesis*—as I argued on p. 21 above. Therefore, perfecting the motivation to perform good actions also requires receiving teaching, from which the virtue of thought arises, according to *EN* 2.1.¹⁷²

Since *phronesis*, according to Aristotle, is excellence in deliberation (*euboulia*), reaching good actions on the basis of correct particular and universal premises,¹⁷³ it is not concerned ‘only with particulars’—i.e. with ‘the that’—but ‘also deals with universals’¹⁷⁴—i.e. with ‘the because’. Therefore developing *phronesis* must involve acquiring ‘the because’ (*to dioti*)—the understanding of why good actions are good—to complement ‘the that’ and fine habits. Since the aim of moral development is not to merely become a good person, but to acquire perfect moral virtue, as *Pol.* 3.4 tells us, Burnyeat sees a similar implication in Aristotle’s quotation of Hesiod at

¹⁶⁹ Apart from *EN* 7.12, see also *EN* 10.9 1175a29ff. Sherman (1989) appeals to this passage (on pp. 183–9) to argue that since pleasure comes from the actualisation of a natural capacity, such as a capacity to act well, the more one actualises one’s natural capabilities, the more pleasure one gets.

¹⁷⁰ *Pol.* 3.4 1276b35.

¹⁷¹ Burnyeat 1980 p. 74.

¹⁷² See *EN* 2.1 1103a14–16, quoted on p. 54 above.

¹⁷³ Aristotle discusses *euboulia* in *EN* 6.9 1142b17–33, and says that it is a sign of *phronimos* in 31–2.

¹⁷⁴ *EN* 6.8 1141b14–16.

the end of *EN* 1.4: ‘the best is who knows (*noein*) all things’—that is, who understands why good actions are good—‘but good in his turn is he too who obeys one who reasons well’—i.e. a merely finely-habituated person.¹⁷⁵ After acquiring ‘the because’, a ‘person’s conception of what is truly pleasant’, writes Burnyeat, is ‘shaped by his independent, reasoned conception of what is good, just as it was earlier shaped by his father’s or teacher’s advice’.¹⁷⁶ Once the person understands why good actions are good, he begins to perform them because they are intrinsically good, not only because performing them feels pleasant. This understanding of ‘the because’, that we have seen to be a component of *phronesis*, comes, thinks Burnyeat, from listening to ‘lectures about things noble and just’.¹⁷⁷ Such a theoretical teaching must be different from the more basic moral teaching, which consists only in showing a student good actions, and is involved in earlier moral development.

According to Burnyeat’s interpretation, Aristotle’s claims in *EN* 2.1 thus yield the following general conclusions about our moral development: we become morally virtuous through habituation that involves a teacher, and we acquire the virtues of thought to complement habituated character by teaching. The teacher is essential for habituation, because a child needs to be told which actions are good so that he can be successfully habituated into acting well and to come to take intrinsic pleasure in performing good actions. Such pleasure comes naturally from repeated performance of good actions, because acting well, insofar as it is the human good, satisfies our natural desire for the human good, even if we would not know why. This is the first step of moral development. Once childhood habituation is complete, a young person can take the second step and attend theoretical lectures in ethics so as to learn why good actions are good. This level of teaching may lead to the development *phronesis* when the person becomes an adult, which enables him to act well because acting well is intrinsically good, not only because it is pleasant—and thus to have moral virtue.

¹⁷⁵ Burnyeat 1980, p. 71.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

2.3 PROBLEMS IN BURNYEAT AND CURZER'S SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Burnyeat's interpretation is not, however, entirely unproblematic. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I think there are at least two major problems with it. The first is exegetical, while the second relates to Aristotle's conception of moral responsibility. Let us study the exegetical problem now. Burnyeat interprets Aristotle as thinking that the habit of acting well—which a young person must have, according to *EN* 1.4, so as to listen to 'the lectures about things noble and just', and thus for the virtue of *phronesis* to develop—results from performing actions that the person has been told to perform whilst still a child. In Aristotle, one and the same concept of teaching (*didaskalia*) should thus refer to two entirely different types of teaching, telling good actions to a child and lecturing about ethics, depending upon the context.

Although we have studied why such an interpretation might seem attractive in section 2.2 above, we may nevertheless wonder what teaching good actions to a child actually is, if it is not letting him listen to 'lectures on things noble and just' of which he may profit after he has finished his habituation. Aristotle, after all, never talks about what this supposed early moral teaching should involve; saying only that habituation needs a teacher in *EN* 2.1. Burnyeat might reply to this concern by saying that, according to common sense, teaching children to recognise good actions must simply be different, and a far less theoretical form of teaching than the instruction provided in lectures on ethics. A small child cannot be expected to be capable of learning good actions by coming to understand why they are good. Though Aristotle might seem to be in a position to agree—and I hope to demonstrate in Chapter 3 that he indeed thinks that only identifying good actions does not presuppose *phronesis*—in *EN* 10.9 he clearly maintains, however, that 'reason and teaching (*didaskalia*) does never prevail with all, but [in order for them to prevail] the soul of the listener must be already habituated'.¹⁷⁸ Not only benefitting from advanced, theoretical teaching for *phronesis*, but from teaching in general—such as from being taught which actions are good—requires that a child is already well-habituated. Since only finely

¹⁷⁸ *EN* 10.9 1179a26–31.

habituated people can morally profit from listening to teaching, there could not thus be two levels of moral teaching, one for children and another for already finely-habituated people. Instead, moral teaching should be reserved only for the latter.

The above considerations have encouraged Howard Curzer to remark in a paper *Aristotle's Painful Path to Virtue* that Burnyeat's interpretation is 'misleading':¹⁷⁹

Of course, if there were no other way to guide learners [apart from teaching them good actions], then Burnyeat's interpretation might be charitable despite Aristotle's protestations that ethics teaching presupposes that the learner already knows *the that*. However, there are various ways to keep learners on track without either giving them *the that* (i.e., teaching learners "this is the right thing to do in this situation") or reducing education to mere mindless repetition (e.g., making learners stand fast in battle again and again no matter what the risk and likelihood of success). For example, one might merely prevent the learners from acting wrongly, allowing them to discover the right acts for themselves.¹⁸⁰

According to Curzer's suggestion, a teacher (*didaskalos*) in habituation, according to *EN* 2.1, might not need to provide a child with any explicit teaching (*didaskalia*) about good actions, but simply let him discern good actions and acquire the ability to identify them on his own. At this stage of moral development, the teacher's role is not to instruct, but to supervise and react. As we will see later in this chapter, Curzer thinks that instead of teaching good actions to children, moral teachers should mostly reproach and punish children if they act badly. This (what we may call as) preventive habituation, Curzer argues, prevents children from performing bad actions through developing a sense of shame in them, in contrast to Burnyeat, according to whom they will be naturally motivated to avoid bad actions by coming to enjoy acting well.

Curzer's suggestion avoids Burnyeat's problems with Aristotle's text. However, I think that Curzer fails to sufficiently develop it. He does not study the positive side of his suggestion, namely how preventing children from acting badly by habituating them to be sensitive to shame may help them to learn to identify good actions. Curzer only claims that it should help; with a sense of shame, people 'come to choose, not just the acts they think are virtuous, but the acts that really are virtuous'.¹⁸¹ Unfortunately this is not exactly what Aristotle seems to think. While describing the

¹⁷⁹ Curzer 2012, p. 332. The paper was first published in 2002, and revised in Curzer 2012.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Curzer 2012, p. 339. He does not quote Aristotle's text to support this claim.

conception of good actions as avoidance of excess and deficiency in *EN* 2.9, the famous doctrine of the mean, Aristotle remarks that it is one thing to learn not to act in a way that would make one subject to shame—‘to depart from the most contrary to the mean’—but quite another to discern the truly virtuous thing to do—to ‘to hit the mean’.¹⁸² The implications of Curzer’s inattention to Aristotle’s view, together with the second problem in Burnyeat, become clear when we study their interpretations in the light of Aristotle’s conception of moral responsibility.

As we registered in Chapter 1, Aristotle thinks that one is responsible for his actions provided that one was able to rationally choose whether or not to habituate himself into certain ways of acting.¹⁸³ The philosopher elaborates his view in *EN* 3.5:

Since the object of rational desire is the end [i.e. the human good], whereas the objects of deliberation and rational choice (*prohairesis*) are the means conducive to the end, actions belonging to these means would be based on rational choice and be voluntary. And the activities of the virtues belong to these means. Virtue too, then is up to us and similarly vice as well.¹⁸⁴

In light of above passage, and considering Aristotle’s conception of rational choice as a choice made independently of any non-rational desire—as I interpreted it on p. 31 above—it seems mysterious how one could become responsible for one’s actions if our preferences for acting result from external stimuli: in the case of finely-habituated people, either from learning to avoid being ashamed in other people’s eyes, as Curzer thinks, or from coming to enjoy performing the actions that they have been taught to consider as good, as Burnyeat maintains. If you are habituated to either abstain from or enjoy certain actions, and you therefore eventually become finely habituated, it may be asked at which point you were able to independently choose to acquire fine habits and thus became entitled to the appropriate praise.¹⁸⁵ Provided that you only abstain from choosing to act badly, this does not imply that

¹⁸² *EN* 2.9 1109a30–b1.

¹⁸³ See pp. 39–41 above.

¹⁸⁴ *EN* 3.5 1113b2–5.

¹⁸⁵ This question is esp. hard to answer due to Aristotle’s famous view in *EN* 10.9 1180a4–5 that moral habituation is roughly analogous to obedience to law, which is *externally imposed* and *to be obeyed by necessity, not by choice* (of which, apart from Burnyeat 1980, neither Sherman 1989, who assumes Aristotle habituation to involve also self-directed intellectual development, seems take into account).

you have made the choice to become finely habituated. Should we thus think that, unless someone first tried the vicious life and then rejected it, then returning to the good path of moral development (or *vice versa* if he were to be a morally bad person), Aristotle would not regard that person as responsible for his actions?

Burnyeat does not present any measures for avoiding this uncharitable implication, and it seems that he could not, because by assuming that children need to be taught good actions, he also assumes that they do not have the ability to choose good actions in advance of receiving this teaching. Since Curzer does not attempt to study how a child comes to identify good actions, neither does he have a solution to this problem. However, unlike Burnyeat, Curzer's interpretation has logical space for a solution: if the child comes to avoid bad actions as a result of developing a sense of shame, it still remains possible that he could become genuinely responsible for his character. It is only required that before his character is fully ingrained, he develops the rational—or, *dianoetikon*, as we established at the end of Chapter 1—ability to identify good actions independently of any moral teaching he has received, and also from his sense of shame and desire for pleasure. With such ability the young person could rationally choose whether to steer his development towards moral virtue or not.

2.4 CURZER'S INTERPRETATION AND ARISTOTLE'S TEXT

Since Curzer's interpretative suggestion seems to provide us with an attractive possibility for carving a way out of Burnyeat's inability to accommodate Aristotle's account of moral responsibility, we should perhaps take it as our starting-point for interpreting Aristotle's theory of moral development until the point of acquiring good habits. However, we now have to study whether it is correct or not, and look to what Aristotle actually says about how to develop a sense of shame, as well as the contribution of this sense to moral development. Curzer suggests that avoiding punishment and reproach initially motivates a child to abstain from acting badly, and eventually, after having been punished and reproached many times, he becomes better able to anticipate which acts would be despicable to other people, i.e. he

acquires a sense of shame.¹⁸⁶ Thus the proposal, albeit plausible as an account of the development of the sense of shame, leaves open how the child comes to identify good actions or becomes motivated to perform them. Burnyeat is no doubt right about the important motivating role of the noble pleasure that the satisfaction of the natural desire of the human good brings to a person who acts well.¹⁸⁷ However, if early moral development were more about acquiring the sense of shame, instead of, *pace* Burnyeat, being told which kind of actions are good, then a child would need to learn to identify good actions independently, allowing him to eventually rationally choose to perform them, and be thus to become responsible for his future acts.

The main textual support for Curzer's interpretation comes from *EN* 10.9. In a passage that follows the statement about the inability of all but finely-habituated people to profit from moral teaching (quoted on p. 53 above), Aristotle elaborates:

While speeches [*logoi*] seem to have the power to encourage and stimulate the free youth (*eleutheroi*), and to make a character, which is of good birth (*eugenos*), and a true lover of what is good, ready to be possessed by virtue, they are not able to stimulate and encourage the many (*hoi polloi*) to nobility and goodness. For these do not by nature obey the sense of *aidos* (shame, guilt, remorse) but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their shamefulness, but through fear of punishment.¹⁸⁸

It is not immediately obvious how this passage supports Curzer's interpretation. Coming to see this requires us to analyse the text from its very first lines, in which Aristotle states that 'free youth' (*eleutheroi*) are 'the lovers of what is good', presumable meaning that they enjoy acting well, and keep away from acting badly. Since free youth are, however, neither morally virtuous—they are only 'ready to be

¹⁸⁶ See Curzer 2012, p. 338.

¹⁸⁷ Curzer (Ibid.) questions Burnyeat's interpretation that receiving pleasure is the most important motivation for a moral learner to act well on the basis of Aristotle's never explicitly claiming this (p. 325). He proposes (by appealing to *EN* 10.9 1179b7–13 on p. 337) that shame could be a *more* important force in leading people to act well. However, since we have seen Aristotle say, in *EN* 2.9 (see p. 49 above), that learning to avoid bad actions does not help for discerning good actions, Curzer's claim is hardly plausible. The sense of shame can therefore *only* steer a person away from bad actions, and since virtuous actions yield pleasure insofar as performing them satisfies our natural desire for the human good (a point made on p. 46 above), the pleasure of acting well remains a more probable candidate for the primary motivation for a moral learner to perform good actions.

¹⁸⁸ *EN* 10.9 1179b7–13. In 1180a4 Aristotle repeats that 'the many obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than what is noble'.

possessed by virtue' at some point in the future¹⁸⁹—are yet even identifiable with finely-habituated people,¹⁹⁰ and are no more than 'of good birth' (*eugenes*), Aristotle seems to imply that the free youth somehow want to act well and hate acting badly even before they are habituated to acting well. Aristotle also says that despite their lack of experience, the free youth can nevertheless be stimulated and encouraged by moral speech, probably because they already love what is good.

This claim might easily seem to contradict the philosopher's earlier claim. For we have seen that Aristotle says, in the immediately preceding lines, quoted on p. 62 above, that only finely-habituated people can profitably listen to moral teaching—a statement reflecting his views introduced in *EN* 1.3 and 1.4, that in order 'to listen adequately lectures about things good and just', one has to have fine habits and experience in moral life.¹⁹¹ There is, however, a way for us to read these two successive claims about the proper audience for moral speech in *EN* 10.9 that avoids the contradiction. We can assume that in the former claim, Aristotle, by denying the capability of unhabituated people to benefit from moral teaching, may refer to the same moral teaching to which he refers in *EN* 1.4—that is, listening to lectures in ethics to learn *phronesis*. In the latter claim, the philosopher does not, however, even mention teaching (*didaskalia*), but only speech (*logos*), which he suggests can encourage and stimulate morally uneducated and unhabituated youth, provided that they only love what is good. Now, listening to moral speech is presumably less cognitively demanding than attending philosophical lectures on ethical matters. Although a person might be unable to adequately listen to such lectures without moral habituation and experience in life, he can, we may presume, nevertheless be

¹⁸⁹ This view may seem to depict Aristotle as an elitist who thinks that only the free youth, the offspring of people who had citizens right in Ancient Athens, are fit to become finely habituated, because they are of a better nature than the many. However, he could also be taken to think that the superior educability of the free youth derives only from the fact that they tend to live in an environment that prompts them to develop a strong sense of shame. If we adopt this more pragmatic view, then Aristotle could think anyone who lives in a proper environment could become like a free youth in this relevant respect and thus become finely habituated. Also Curzer adopts such a view.

¹⁹⁰ Aristotle denies in *EN* 1.3 1095a5–10 (B&C) that youth could be sufficiently experienced or habituated to attend ethical teaching: 'hence of the political (ethical) art, a young person is not an appropriate student, for he is inexperienced in the actions pertaining to life [...] further, because he is disposed to follow passions (i.e. does not have a finely-habituated character) he will listen pointlessly and unprofitably, since the end involved is not knowledge but action'.

¹⁹¹ See previous footnote and *EN* 1.4 1095b4–8, quoted on p. 56 above.

stimulated and encouraged by moral speech if he only enjoys virtuous acting.¹⁹²

If this conclusion, by which Aristotle could avoid contradicting himself in EN 10.9, is correct, Burnyeat could not be right in claiming that we have to be taught good actions in order to ever come to enjoy performing them. Instead, Aristotle seems to think that we cannot listen to moral speech unless we already enjoy acting well and hate bad actions. This is what Curzer's interpretation implies. According to Curzer, the sense of shame, which brings one to abhor bad acting, is not taught—just as the desire to act well, natural virtue, is in us by nature according to Aristotle.¹⁹³

At the end of the above passage, Aristotle ascertains that having a sense of shame is what differentiates the free youth, who are apt to become inspired by right moral speech and therefore to develop fine characters, from other people, or 'the many' (*hoi polloi*), who abstain from acting badly only because they are afraid of punishment, and who neither respond to right moral speech nor can expect to develop fine characters. Here is Curzer's textual basis for claiming the importance of developing a sense of shame in early moral development. Since the many are not 'incurably bad', according to Aristotle,¹⁹⁴ something should presumably enable even them to develop a sense of shame. By now, it is clear that it would be quite useless to begin their moral habituation from teaching them which actions are good. Curzer thinks that Aristotle therefore considers the natural fear of punishment to be the catalyst of this process.¹⁹⁵ We have seen that Curzer thinks that the principal role of a teacher in habituation is to prevent the child from acting wrongly by developing a sense of shame in him. Such a preventive habituation might (if we are charitable to Aristotle) eventually get even 'the many' to desire to act virtuously—i.e. to become like the free youth in this morally relevant respect, able to take the right moral speech to their hearts and focus on habituating their characters towards moral virtue.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Curzer 2012 notices this solution to Aristotle's apparent contradiction on p. 334–5.

¹⁹³ See Curzer 2012, p. 332, quoted on p. 63 above. For natural virtue, see p. 59 above.

¹⁹⁴ In EN 10.9 1180a3–10 Aristotle says that the many who 'disobey and are of inferior nature' to virtuous people should be punished, as opposed to 'incurably bad' people, whom *even punishment* does not help, and who should thus be 'completely expelled' from the moral community. This remark implies that the many can develop at least a sense of shame through receiving punishment.

¹⁹⁵ Curzer p. 337.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. EN 10.9 1180a1–4, in which Aristotle states that laws can habituate people further. This may be taken to indicate that rights laws can improve 'the many' to desire to act well.

Curzer suggests that our natural fear of punishment could develop into a sense of shame through the cognitive process that he calls ‘internalizing punishments’.¹⁹⁷ Curzer describes this process as follows: ‘the many move from being punished for vicious acts to punishing themselves for vicious acts. After her parents have scolded and grounded Betty several times for getting drunk [for example], she almost hears their voices in her head when she wakes up with a hangover’.¹⁹⁸ This psychological experience, according to Curzer, makes Betty desire to abstain from excessive drinking—not because she anticipates that her parents could actually punish her for her excessive drinking—she is aware that they might not even know that she has been drinking again—but because she recognises that excessive drinking is acting badly. Only acting well, consciously of the goodness of her actions, would therefore silence her internal voices. Did he cease drinking primarily in order to silence her internal voices? Or was it to avoid punishment? In that case, another voice might probably reproach her for not being honest or properly respectful to her parents, *etc.* In brief, she would not be able to prevent her action from having shameful aspects, of which she is now afraid was she not acting well because of the intrinsic value of acting well.¹⁹⁹ As Aristotle writes in *Rhet.* 2.6: ‘shame is the impression of dishonour that makes us to avoid [dishonour] as such and not because of its consequences.’²⁰⁰ When Betty has thus acquired a sense of shame, she has become aware of that acting well is valuable as such. I think that her awareness should bring her pleasure, for he now perceives that acting well for this right reason realises the human good and thus satisfies her natural desire for the good. Since we humans are motivated to learn what brings us pleasure, she is now ‘stimulated and encouraged’ by moral speech.

¹⁹⁷ Perhaps *EN* 2.9 1190b1-7 could support Curzer’s claim. In that passage Aristotle compares habituation to straightening crooked wood. Cf. *Prot.* 325d in which Plato uses a similar metaphor to argue that moral habituation can be very painful, even violent process.

¹⁹⁸ Curzer 2012, p. 337.

¹⁹⁹ Inglis 2014, pp. 279-80 makes the same conclusion.

²⁰⁰ *Rhet* 2.6 1384a22. Aristotle continues by stating that ‘people before whom we feel shame are those whose opinion matter to us.’ One may now think that the sense of shame thus presupposes that we can *choose* (*prohairesthai*) whose opinions to regard as important. But we have capacity for *prohairesis* only once we can rational discern good and bad actions, which, according to my interpretation, the sense of shame should *precede*. To counter this objection, I would point out that Aristotle does not think that children *choose* to respect e.g. their parents, but rather claims they respect them by having been ‘born of them’, because ‘they are the causes of their being and nourishment’ *etc.* (*EN* 8.12)

Curzer's interpretation enables us to read the passage of *EN* 1.4, the only place in *EN* in which Aristotle discusses the concepts *to hoti* and *to dioti*, slightly differently to the way in which Burnyeat reads it—as we have seen on p. 47 above. According also to Curzer, *to hoti* signifies the competence to identify good actions.²⁰¹ But *pace* Burnyeat—we can conclude on the basis of Curzer's arguments reviewed above—it is probably not acquired through obediently listening to moral teachers' advice about which actions are good. Rather, anyone with a sense of shame can be motivated and can acquire *to hoti*, even without receiving explicit moral teaching. Curzer does not tell us, however, exactly how one may acquire it. Since Aristotle emphasised, however, in *EN* 10.9, that a sense of shame enables the free youth to be stimulated and encouraged by moral speech, we may assume that the people with a sense of shame could somehow develop the ability to identify good actions by listening to other people's moral speech. Once the people with a sense of shame can identify good actions, they could choose to begin to habituate themselves to acting well, become eventually finely-habituated, and ready to cultivate *phronesis*.

2.5 *SYNESIS*—THE ABILITY TO IDENTIFY GOOD ACTIONS

In this section, I attempt to show that *synesis*, ability that Aristotle introduces in *EN* 6.10, is a *dianoetikon* ability with which people can discern good actions on the basis of listening other people's opinions. I therefore argue that *synesis* has a wider area of operation, going beyond merely assessing the moral opinions of other people, than many previous interpreters have suggested. However, I reject that *synesis* must hence be a *virtue of thought*, because on my interpretation, it belongs to most people.

In the previous section, we have discovered that in order to be able to choose to act well, which is precondition for moral responsibility, one needs to have a rational ability to identify good actions, as only habituation cannot provide us independent choice. At most, as we have seen Curzer to convincingly argue, it can instil the sense of shame in us, which enables us to abstain from acting badly. As we have learned in

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp. 321-2.

section 2.3 above, only abstaining from shameful actions is not, however, yet acting well, which, as Aristotle elaborates in *EN* 2.6, is acting ‘at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way’.²⁰² Neither can the ability to identify good actions be exhaustively taught to us, *pace* Burnyeat, by moral teachers, through telling which actions are good—because then it would not suffice to ground our moral responsibility, as we registered in section 2.3 above. In order to enable to a person choose his actions, and thus justify his moral responsibility, the person’s ability to identify good actions should be such that he can develop it independently of the (possibly mistaken) conceptions of good that people may try to teach to him. Only with this condition can that ability enable him to genuinely choose his actions. Therefore we should expect Aristotle to establish somewhere in *EN* that we have an ability to identify good actions, which is not taught, and which virtually all people with a sense of shame, who can discern bad actions—that is, most people—can acquire.²⁰³ This ability would presumably correspond with the aspect of *nous* that apprehends particular good actions without deducing them from universals as discussed on pp. 47-7 above.

In his interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of moral development, Curzer does not, however—unfortunately—even raise the question of how we can come to identify good actions. He only successfully challenges Burnyeat’s interpretation that we learn to identify them by being told which actions are good—but does not present any alternative way of learning to identify them. But unlike Burnyeat’s interpretation, Curzer’s has a logical space for the ability to identify good actions, which operation not at all determined by how one has been habituated to act in his early moral environment, and what acting he might have been taught to regard as good earlier. Only such ability that can remain unaffected by non-rational desires—and which also therefore must belong to *nous*, to its aspect that pertains to particular actions—could ensure that a young person can choose to take the first step towards virtue, become a finely-habituated person, who may then attend lectures in ethics, which shall help him to acquire *phronesis* and become virtuous, or, refuse to take it, and become bad.

²⁰² *EN* 2.6 1106b20–23.

²⁰³ See footnote 150 on p. 59 above for reference.

In *EN* 6.10, which is one of the least studied sections of *EN*, Aristotle describes a rational ability, which he calls *synesis* (often translated, misleadingly, as we will see below, as ‘comprehension’²⁰⁴ or ‘understanding’²⁰⁵). This ability, acquiring which should be in most people’s reach and which, thinks Aristotle, is acquired ‘by nature’ (*physei*)²⁰⁶ could allow us to identify good actions, and thus become responsible for our actions. Let me now quote entire *EN* 6.10 in five subsections:

1. There is also *synesis* and good *synesis*, with reference to which we speak of those who use *synesis* or use *synesis* well. *Synesis* is in general neither the same thing as proper knowledge (*episteme*), nor the same thing as opinion (*doxa*) (in which case everyone would have *synesis*) nor any one of the particular sciences (*kata meros epistemoun*)—for example, medicine, which is concerned with the matters of health, and geometry, with magnitudes. *Synesis* is concerned neither with beings that are eternal and unmoved nor with just any one or every one of the things that come into being, but rather with the things about which someone might be perplexed and deliberate. Hence it is concerned with the same things as moral understanding (*phronesis*).

2. *Synesis* and moral understanding (*phronesis*) is not the same, however, for moral understanding is characterized by the giving of commands (*epitaktikei estin*): its end is what one ought or ought not to do. But *synesis* is characterized by discernment (*krisis*) alone. For *synesis* and good *synesis*, as well as those who use *synesis* and those who do so well, is the same thing.

3. And *synesis* is neither having moral understanding nor gaining it (*oute to lambaneim phronesis*).

4. Rather, just as learning is said to be using *synesis* (*synienai*), whenever it makes use of proper knowledge, so *synesis* is said to consist of making use of opinion to render a discernment about what someone else says (*allou legontos*), regarding the matters moral understanding is concerned with—and rendering such a discernment nobly. For doing something well is the same as doing it nobly

5. And from this [ability], the name ‘*synesis*’—in reference to which we speak of those who are of good *synesis* (*eusynetoi*)—has been derived, namely, from the *synesis* involved in learning (*manthanein*). For we often say learning when we mean using *synesis*.

Some of the most recent commentators of *EN*, Broadie and Rowe, with Bartlett and Collins, seem to pass *EN* 6.10 without giving it much attention, assuming that *synesis* is exclusively a part of *phronesis* and therefore thinking that what Aristotle says here rephrases what he says earlier about *phronesis*, only with emphasis to its discerning instead of deliberative aspect.²⁰⁷ Perhaps the most attentive recent readings of the passage can be found in Norman Dahl’s book, *Practical Reason, Aristotle and The Weakness of Will*, in which Dahl dedicates a section to it, and in one Robert

²⁰⁴ See e.g. Rowe and Broadie 2002, and (B&C) 2011

²⁰⁵ See e.g. Ross 1995.

²⁰⁶ *EN* 6.11 1143b7–9. See p. 110 below for more study on Aristotle’s expression ‘by nature’ in *EN*.

²⁰⁷ E.g. Rowe and Broadie 2002, and (B&C) 2011 *ad loc*. However, of the earlier commentators, Gauthier and Jolif 1958 distinguish *synesis* from *phronesis* (see fn. 211 below).

Louden's article. Both Dahl and Louden notice that *synesis* must differ from *phronesis*. Dahl writes, '[s]ynesis is like a purely intellectual or speculative grasp of moral ends, for it is primarily exercised when one passes judgment on the advice or moral pronouncements of someone else.'²⁰⁸ Louden would give a wider range of application for *synesis* as capacity to 'issue a correct judgement of someone else's choice or action' apart from merely judging his moral pronouncements or advice.²⁰⁹

Dahl and Louden's shared conclusion, that *synesis* is a speculative ability that is only concerned with judging other people's moral positions, comes from two passages of *EN* 6.10. Aristotle remarks in passage 4 that *synesis* is said to be a correct opinion (*doxa*) about what someone else says about moral matters, and in passage 2, he distinguishes *phronesis* and *synesis* by stating that the *synesis* does not give commands, but only discerns. Dahl assumes, apparently following Gauthier and Jolif, that this distinction is between '[moral] knowledge that is motivationally grounded thus has an effect on what a person does and [moral] knowledge that may function only on a speculative level'.²¹⁰ Louden adds, going more beyond Aristotle's words, that a '*synetos* is in effect a very good listener and a perceptive critic.'²¹¹

The claim that *synesis* 'may not' be motivationally grounded seems plausible, as even an akratic has a correct moral judgement of other people's moral opinions. Moreover, Aristotle's statement in the passage 2, that only *phronesis* '*epitaktikei estin*,'²¹² while *synesis* is only '*kritikon*', possibly comes from Plato's *Statesman*, in which Socrates distinguishes the commanding (*epitaktikon*) activity of kings from the judgement (*krisis*) of judges.²¹³ Since Socrates employs this distinction to convey that only the *epitaktikon* activity leads to action—which is why it properly belongs to

²⁰⁸ Dahl 1984, p. 46.

²⁰⁹ Louden 1997, p. 112. *Italics* removed.

²¹⁰ Dahl 1985, p. 46. Cf. Gauthier and Jolif (1950), p. 230, who comment the passage 2 as follows: 'la sagesse [*phronesis*] requiert quelque chose de plus [to *synesis*]: il requiert l'intervention du désir rectifié par le vertus morales. For their extended commentary, see fn. 216 below.

²¹¹ Louden 1997, p. 113, paraphrasing Stewart 1892 *ad loc.*

²¹² Aristotle mentions that *phronesis* is *epitaktike* also in *EN* 6.13 1145a9.

²¹³ See Plato, *Stat.* 260c. One might think that if Aristotle takes this analogue seriously, he would think that *synesis* should thus presuppose *phronesis* (like Aquinas according to Ojakangas 2013, see fn. 223 below), because for Plato, good judges are *phronimoi* I think, however, that Aristotle would not have used Plato's analogue to extract *this* specific conclusion, because, after all, also good kings are *phronimoi* for Plato – which would made the analogue useless in comparing *synesis* and *phronesis*.

kings—Aristotle wants to convey here that only *phronesis* entails that its possessor acts well.²¹⁴ Gauthier and Jolif did not register that Aristotle might refer to this particular passage in Plato, but they mention (without referring to any specific passage in Plato) that Aristotle's distinction is preceded by Plato's very similar distinction,²¹⁵ and noticed that the passage 1, in which Aristotle says that *synesis* 'is concerned with the same things (*peri ta auta*) as *phronesis*', may have a similar implication even on its own. If the judgements of *synesis* and *phronesis* concern the same things, then these judgements must have some difference in order to warrant the separation of these abilities; and this difference, they suggest, could be that the latter judgement also contains a motivating imperative to perform the good action.²¹⁶

The ensuing conclusion that *synesis* does *not have* a power to command action does not need to mean, however, that *synesis must* operate without corresponding moral motivation. Since with non-*phronimoi*, the factor that determines whether a person will act in accordance with his moral discernments or not is whether his non-rational desires have been properly habituated or not (as I shall show in Chapter 3 below), also *synesis* could be 'motivationally grounded'. Morally well-habituated people would presumably not very easily ignore the discernments of their *synesis* about other people's moral views, but respect them in their pursuit of acting finely.

On the basis of this specification that also Dahl and Louden's interpretation allow, I would like, however, to challenge their shared conclusion that *synesis* should judge

²¹⁴ If Aristotle had disagreed with Plato here, he would have presumably justified his disagreement as he does in the other places in which he disagrees with Plato (cf. *EN* 1.6). This time he employs, however, Plato's distinction without even giving credit his predecessor, as if taking it as granted.

²¹⁵ Gauthier and Jolif (1958), p. 528: 'Platon distingue expressément entre la connaissance judicative, *kritike*, et la connaissance impérative, *epitaktike*.'

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 531. Here Gauthier and Jolif use quite Kantian language, according to the scholarly fashion of the 1950s, but it does not obscure the point of their observation: 'Ce qui distingue donne le jugement de la *synesis*, qui n'est qu'un jugement, du jugement impératif de la sagesse, ce n'est pas son contenu: Aristote y insiste fortement, c'es deux jugements ont même objet. [...] Ils se prononcèrent l'un et autre sur l'action morale concrète, ils disent l'un et autre ce que je dois faire *hic et nunc*, le jugement de la *synesis*, parce qu'il s'exprime en termes de pure raison, met l'accent sur l'obligation rationnelle et énonce à l'indicatif: 'je dois, *hic et nunc*, faire cette action.' [...] 'Au contraire, le jugement impératif de la sagesse [i.e. *phronesis*], parce qu'il à opéré sa jonction avec le désir rectifié par les vertus morales, va plus avant: il met l'accent, non plus sur l'obligation, c'est affaire entendue, mais sur l'action à poser effectivement, et il prononce plus l'indicatif, mais à l'impératif, e il ne dit plus: 'je dois *hic et nunc* faire cette action-ci', mais bien: 'fais *hic et nunc* cette action que tu dois faire.'

exclusively *other* people's moral views and actions.²¹⁷ What could using *synesis* in a 'motivationally grounded' way mean if not using the discernments of *synesis* about other people's moral views to evaluate one's own acting in the light of those views, and to improve it? Moreover, even the morally unmotivated people, who fail to use their *synesis* to improve their own acting, should, I believe, be capable of using *synesis* to evaluate their own acting. To arrive at this conclusion, we should only consider Aristotle's description about the epistemic nature of *synesis* in passage 1.

The philosopher begins passage 1 by eliminating the possibilities that *synesis* is science (*episteme*), opinion (*doxa*) or a particular science (*kata meros episteme*). For Aristotle, proper *episteme* is based on unchangeable universal principles,²¹⁸ but he states *synesis* is not concerned with such principles (this shows that 'comprehension' or 'understanding' are bad translations, because one could be said to comprehend or understand, for example, mathematical axioms, which belong to *episteme*). *Synesis* is not an opinion, because opinions can be about impossible things, but *synesis* is a practical ability.²¹⁹ Neither can *synesis* be a particular science, such as medicine or geometry. As Aristotle's examples in passage 1 show, by this concept Aristotle refers to crafts based on applying more or less universal principles to particular cases, one of which *synesis* neither is. Geometry uses fully universal principles, while medicine applies generalisations, so *synesis* does not apparently use either, but pertains only to particulars. After attempting to establish with what *synesis* is not, Aristotle proceeds to conclude, as emphasised by Gauthier and Jolif, that *synesis* 'is concerned with the same things as *phronesis*,' i.e. with 'human goods,' and in particular, with *actions*.²²⁰

Good actions are not discoverable through the application of certain principles to particular cases, but require discerning the moral demands of circumstances as we

²¹⁷ Dahl 1984, p. 46 and Loudon 1997, p. 112.

²¹⁸ For Aristotle's definition of *episteme*, see *A. Post* 1.33 88b30–7, *Met.* 7.15 1040a1–2 and *EN* 6.3 1139b19–24. Cf. *Met.* 6.2 1027a19–21, in which he thinks that (certain) sciences are, however, such in which truths hold only for the most part (just as in ethics). In *DPA* 639b21–640a8, he clarifies that physics and other natural sciences can be distinguished from theoretical sciences, such as astrology and theology. This distinction seems to point out that in natural sciences, just as in ethics, theories can be based on generalisations, but in unqualified (theoretical) sciences, always on unchangeable universals.

²¹⁹ Cf. *EN* 3.1 111b31, in which Aristotle states opinion can be about anything, even the impossible.

²²⁰ See *EN* 6.5 1140b21 for the first quotation. Aristotle specifies that, in particular, *phronesis* deal with good actions in *EN* 6.7 1141b21 to differentiate it from *sophia*, which also is concerned with good, even the 'best things in the world' (1141a21), but not with actions. See Bataillard 1997 for more discussion about Aristotle's possible reasons, including this, for differentiating *phronesis* from *sophia*.

concluded at the end of Chapter 1. Good actions are thus such as that in order to be good at all, they must be good for someone, at some specific time and place. Since an agent's personal situation thus affects which acting would be good for him, a *synetos*, so as to be able to discern good actions, would not only need to discern the moral opinions of other people, but also be able to relate them to his personal circumstances and aims. On account of its reflective nature, Gauthier and Jolif thus even chose to translate *synesis* as 'la conscience'.²²¹ If *synesis* comes with acquiring the sense of shame, with the consciousness ('la conscience' in French) that certain actions are bad irrespective of whether punishments would ensue from them, but because other people would not approve them, as I suggested on pp. 68-9 above, a person with *synesis* could perhaps identify good actions with e.g. the aid of this reflection: 'is doing this what other people would approve doing in my situation?'²²²

Let us now proceed to passage 2, in which Aristotle continues, as we have already registered, by stating that *phronesis* commands, while *synesis* only discern. Some interpreters have doubted whether *synesis* can discern good actions without the antecedent command of *phronesis* to seek such actions, but if it could discern them on the basis of the sense of shame only, this doubt would disappear.²²³ If only *phronesis* implies that its possessor also acts well—which was the point of Plato's comparison between the 'kings' and 'judges'—then even the person who has a finely habituated character, but not yet *phronesis*, might sometimes fail to act well. I study

²²¹ Gauthier and Jolif (1958). Notice that French 'la conscience' is not synonymous to the English 'conscience'. The French term can mean also a person's moral 'awareness' or 'consciousness', without implying—like the English concept of conscience—that 'it is not the opinions of others, not even public norms, but his inner voice that has ultimate authority over him.' (Ojakangas 2013, p. 3).

²²² In contemporary virtue ethics, Rosalind Hursthouse (2000) has proposed a quite similar model for identifying right actions: 'An action A is right for S in circumstances C if and only if a completely virtuous agent would characteristically A in C' (p. 7). The only difference between her and Aristotle's possible model is that the philosopher would replace the condition 'a completely virtuous agent would characteristically A in C' with 'other people would approve A-ing in C'. Interestingly, this difference would make Aristotle immune to a certain objection to Hursthouse. Namely, Johnston (2003) has argued that it is not always either right or good to act as a virtuous person would act (pp. 816–20). For example: if someone, who is not able to stop drinking alcohol once he begins, wants to recover from her addiction, he should *not* attempt to drink moderately (as a virtuous person would), but stop drinking altogether. This is also the kind of acting that people around him would recommend to him.

²²³ E.g. Ojakangas 2013, p. 51. According to him, in '*Nicomachean Ethics* we find a notion that [as Aquinas comments it] perfectly fits with Aquinas' definition of *conscientia* [in ST] This notion is *synesis*', and in Aquinas, *conscientia* "makes judgement" using the intellectual habit of *phronesis*.'

how *phronesis* could improve even a finely-habituated person's propensity to act well in Chapter 4, which would offer light also on Aristotle's reasons for insisting in *EN* 6.13, quoted on p. 22 above, that one can be properly virtuous only once he has *phronesis*. Aristotle stresses, however, in passage 3, that *synesis* is not acquiring or having *phronesis* (*oute to lambaneim phronesis*). This claim can be taken in two ways: either confirming that *synesis* must be a part of *phronesis*, because it does not help in acquiring *phronesis*, or, alternatively, that only having *synesis* does not yet imply that its possessor will acquire *phronesis*. The former interpretation that assume that having discerning ability must entail having also the commanding capacity, would however, clash with Plato's comparison—according to which there are people that can judge without commanding—which might well be a source for Aristotle's account of the respective tasks of *synesis* and *phronesis*: judging and commanding.

Passage 2 also allows considering *synesis* as an ability that even not-yet-morally-habituated people can have. Provided that having *synesis* does not imply acquiring *phronesis*, and since a person with a habit of acting well is in the process of acquiring *phronesis*, then *synesis* could also belong even to those who do not have developed a firm motivation to act well. This is how it could ground our responsibility for actions: with *synesis*, one could discern (*krinein*) good actions before being motivated to perform them. We have noticed Aristotle to say in *EN* 3.5 (see pp. 40-1 above), that such discernment enables us to choose (*prohairessthai*) our actions on the basis of deliberation, which, in turn, accounts for our responsibility for the results of those choices. The discernment of good actions by *synesis* is therefore different from the intuition of the nature of *eudaimonia* by *nous*, to which all that we do can be ascribed according to *EN* 3.5 1114b15 (see p. 42 & 46-7 above). Performing the actions that we have chosen to perform with *synesis* shape this intuition either towards, or away from, the correct conception of *eudaimonia*, and teaching (see p. 113 below) could enable us to articulate it: say what we think realising *eudaimonia* requires from us.

Passage 4 seems to shed more light on the way in which *synesis* identifies good actions. The passage is, however, difficult to unpack. Aristotle seems to formulate it as an analogue between the way in which people speak of *synesis*, and his conception of the operation of *synesis*. Even the sentence with which the analogue begins seems,

however, incoherent. Aristotle writes ‘learning is said to be using *synesis* whenever it makes use of proper knowledge’, although he has just explicitly denied in passage 1 that *synesis* is concerned with proper knowledge. In order to make sense of the sentences, we must thus assume that he, as the phrase ‘is said to be’ (*legetai*) indicates, is now exposing the opinion of some other people, with which he does not, however, agree. If this reading is right, then the diversity in people’s conceptions of what *synesis* is may explain why passage 1 is relatively lengthy compared to the rest of Aristotle’s arguments in *EN* 6.10: he had to make clear there that not all common conceptions of *synesis* refer to the conception of *synesis* that he has now in mind.

Back in passage 4, in the second sentence of the analogue, Aristotle defines *synesis* as an ability that uses the opinions of the others in order to discern which actions are good, that is, from someone else’s speech about the matters with which *phronesis* is concerned (that is, about how one ought to act), which also reaches the discernment well, or, nobly. This statement could follow from the first sentence only provided that the parallel Aristotle wants to draw between his and some other people’s conception of *synesis* is only the fact that both conceptions see the most important aspect of *synesis* to be making use of other people’s opinions. Despite their mutual differences, both mentioned conceptions of *synesis* share this view. For even the word *synesis*—in virtue of its beginning, *syn-*, which refers to doing something ‘with other people’ in Greek—emphasises this.²²⁴ In this case, if Aristotle’s analogue were about the necessity of other people for the operation of *synesis*, this would lend support to my suggestion that *synesis* could operate as reflection on whether other people would approve of my performing certain action in my situation.

Since Aristotle emphasises that *synesis* and good *synesis* are the same in passage 2, the last sentence of passage 4 should imply that a person does not have *synesis* at all provided that he does not discern good actions ‘nobly or well’, that is, that he does not reach a true identification of good action. Since only truly good actions are

²²⁴ Louden 1997 suggests (p. 113), without referring to any Aristotle’s text mentioning *synesis*, but to *Pol.* 3.2 1281b31, in which the philosopher claims that ‘multitude of people should share deliberation (*boulesis*) and judging (*krinein*)’ that *synesis* might be used in judging political matters together with other people. Also this interpretation would of course capture the ‘doing with other people’ implication of the prefix *syn-*, but it is speculative unlike my interpretation. For the history of concept of *synesis* (and a closely related concept of *syneidesis*) that notices its political connotations, see e.g. Seel 1953.

unqualifiedly good actions, *synesis* may enable a person not only to discern whether some action would be good from other people's subjective viewpoints, but also to discern whether that action is also good without qualification, and thus truly good. However, provided that a person of *synesis* does not yet have *phronesis*, he does not know why those actions that he discerns to be truly good are good. One may now wonder, however, how one could possibly *reliably* identify an action as unqualifiedly good without knowing why it is good—could not other people's opinion about the goodness of some actions quite often be biased according to their own interests, unintentionally misguided, or plain wrong? We will deal with this important and difficult question in Chapter 3, of which the entire last half is dedicated to the topic. At this time, I present another significant, though less complicated objection to my interpretation, which we can suitably address within the confines of this chapter.

If my above interpretation of *synesis* were endorsed to complement Curzer—as showing how people with a sense of shame could recognise good actions and thus be justifiably responsible for their acting—then *synesis* might seem to be a virtue of thought. Since *synesis* identifies only those actions as good that are truly good, it clearly seems to consist in excellence in identifying good actions. As virtues of thought aim at truth, as opposed to moral virtues that aim at realising the human good, and having *synesis* does not yet imply that one is motivated to perform the actions that one identifies as good, *synesis* seems to fill the criteria of being a virtue of thought. Louden thus thinks that *synesis* is a virtue of thought; and this might be why he labelled *synetos* as 'a very good listener and a perceptive critic', which we might expect from a person possessing the virtue of thought.²²⁵ If *synesis* were a virtue of thought, this would also conveniently explain why Aristotle remarks at the end of *EN* 1.13—which is one of two places in *EN* apart from 6.13 in which the concept of *synesis* is mentioned—'we speak (*legomen*) that some of the virtues [i.e. those that are not moral] are of thought [...] wisdom (*sophia*), *phronesis* and *synesis*'²²⁶.

²²⁵ Louden 1997, p 112.

²²⁶ *EN* 1.13 1103a5. Another places in which Aristotle mentions *synesis* are *EN* 10.9 1180a17–19, in which he remarks that 'those who have experience (*empereia*) discern each thing rightly, and they

This attractive and apparently innocent conclusion, that *synesis* could be a virtue, would, however, put my interpretation under threat. It could be used to argue that Burnyeat's interpretation of Aristotle's model of early moral development could be right. Although the philosopher thinks that developing fine habits does not presupposes teaching, acquiring them requires having *synesis* to identify good actions, and *synesis*, insofar it is a virtue of thought as Aristotle told in *EN* 1.13, has to be taught according to Aristotle's claim in *EN* 2.1, quoted on p. 50 above. Since Burnyeat suggests that teaching is the starting point of moral development, his interpretative tenet may now seem correct. People may learn *synesis* by being taught which actions are good, and acquiring it then enables them to perform them and eventually acquire finely-habituated characters. Thus Curzer and I may seem to be ultimately wrong in interpreting Aristotle as thinking that acquiring fine habits does not probably require a moral teacher to explicitly tell the good actions to a student.

I have, however, a reply to above objection. The last passage of *EN* 6.10—5 in my above numbering—which we have not yet taken into account, can be interpreted to imply that the *synesis* of *EN* 1.13—that which we call (*legomen*) as a virtue of thought—may not be the same as the *synesis* that comes to Aristotle's attention in *EN* 6.10. The philosopher, after all, frequently uses his concepts in many senses: e.g. *logos* means sometimes (what we may translate as) the faculty reason, other times only argument or speech. The following consideration shows, I believe, that the sense of *synesis* in *EN* 6.10 is quite different than in 1.13. In passage 5, Aristotle concludes that the notion of *synesis* 'in reference to which we speak (*legomen*) of those who are of good *synesis*' derives from 'the *synesis* involved in learning.' The first half of Aristotle's statement seems to hark back to the notion of *synesis* of *EN* 1.13, spoken of as a virtue of thought, for presumably we call the same people as having good *synesis* (*eusynetoî*) whom we ascribe the virtue of *synesis*. Now, this elevated concept of (the) *synesis* (as virtue) of good learners derives, according to

identify (*syneseos*) what actions are needed for reaching the end' and in *EN* 10.9 1181a18, in which the philosopher claims that choosing *nomoi* well requires *synesis*. Often *nomoi* is translated as laws in this passage, thus making impression that *synesis* the ability specific to good lawgivers, i.e. to *phronimoi*. However, *nomoi* can also refer to customs, conventions, habits *etc.* in addition to laws, so Aristotle could additionally refer to choosing between habits, for which one does not need to be *phronimos*.

Aristotle, from the fact that learning involves *synesis* as the ability to discern other people's opinions. The statement makes thus clear that there is a difference between the notion of *synesis* as a virtue of thought in *EN* 1.13, a way of talking about *synesis*, and *synesis* as ability to identify good actions, from which the former conception derives. Due to this direction of derivation, it would not follow from Aristotle's claims in *EN* 1.13 in any way that also the latter *synesis* must be a virtue of thought.

Since apart from the hypothetical objector, neither Louden does seem to notice that Aristotle's *synesis* has (at least) two different senses, he ascribes the tasks to *synesis* of *EN* 6.10, such as very good listening skills and ability to perceptive criticism, which would presumably require virtues of thought. Therefore we should conclude that Dahl's more austere interpretation of passage 2 is more plausible than Louden's among the predecessors of my interpretation. As the *synesis* of *EN* 6.10 does not therefore have to be a virtue of thought, *pace* Louden, it neither has to be taught, and the hypothetical objector's argument for Burnyeat's interpretation that claims that moral learning begins in being taught good actions is dispelled. The *synesis* as described *EN* 6.10 is the ability of moral discernment that can acquire through social interaction, and listening to people's moral opinions. Specifying the acquisition of *synesis* remains to be discussed in Chapter 3, together with the already raised question of *how* identifying good actions can be *reliable* only on the basis of other people's opinions, as it may seem that those opinions can often be mistaken.

2.6 THE FIRST STEP: FINELY HABITUATED CHARACTER AND *SYNESIS*

In the course of this and the preceding chapter, we have established that moral development presupposes acquiring first the sense of shame that keeps a child away from acting badly, and, later, a rational ability to identify good actions, *synesis*, which enables a young person to independently choose to act well. These capabilities that most people can develop without conscious choice allow one to take the first step to virtue: to become a finely-habituated, morally responsible person. We arrived at this conclusion by first making clear, in Chapter 1, that Aristotle, *pace* Moss, is a rationalist about cognising unqualifiedly good ends, or, actions, in the sense of thinking that identifying good actions is a task that requires rational capabilities.

After establishing the conclusion, I attempted to delimit my interpretation from alternative versions of the rationalist interpretation. For the rationalist interpretation can accommodate Aristotle's famous statement in *EN* 3.5, that we do not deliberate about ends, in several ways. One version claims that our intuitive reason, *nous* presents us with the blueprint about ends that constitute the human good, or *eudaimonia*, and thus we need to only deliberate how to realise those ends. I argued, however that this 'Grand End view' is not likely Aristotle's view. Instead, Aristotle thinks that different actions realise *eudaimonia* in different situations. Therefore we cannot have any intuitive blueprint of the specific contents of *eudaimonia*, but the philosopher must rather mean in *EN* 3.5 only that we do not deliberate whether good actions realise *eudaimonia*. The particular good actions one needs to identify with a different ability than intuitive *nous*. He may need a conception of *eudaimonia* only to understand, and explicate to other people, *why* a certain identified action is good.

In this Chapter, I attempted to show how Aristotle's model of moral development might utilise the above theory. I began from *EN* 2.1, in which he says that we become morally virtuous by habituation instead of through teaching, but that this habituation requires a teacher. On Burnyeat's interpretation, the task of a teacher is to teach a child which actions are good—to provide him with '*to hoti*'. I pointed out, however, that his interpretation does not fit what Aristotle says in *EN* 1.4 and 10.7, namely that one cannot attend to moral instruction unless he already has *to hoti*. Moreover, only listening to moral teaching and acting in accordance with it does not suffice to bring a child to become responsible for his actions; a choice (*prohairesis*) to act well (or not) is needed, too. Since Burnyeat's interpretation, according to which the knowledge of good actions is given to us by teachers and we are motivated to act well only by experiencing that performing good actions brings pleasure, would not grant the possibility of one's making such *prohairesis*, it cannot account for a person's responsibility for his actions. I therefore argued that Curzer's alternative interpretation is more plausible. It proposes that, instead of telling a child which actions are good, a moral teacher's primary contribution to a child's moral development might be to punish him for bad actions until he develops a sense of shame. In addition, the sense of shame could contribute to the child developing a

motivation to become good, so that this motivation is not based only upon the prospect of pleasure. Curzer does not, however, explain how a child could come to know good actions if not by being told about them. For only abstaining from bad actions is not yet acting well.²²⁷ Therefore I complemented Curzer's interpretation by arguing that Aristotle thinks that all people with the sense of shame have the ability of *synesis*, which the philosopher describes in *EN* 6.10. Aristotle, as several interpreters have noticed, seems to think that having *synesis* does not presuppose one's being even a finely-habituated person. By studying *EN* 6.10 in a greater detail, I found that *synesis* could well be the ability that enables people to identify good actions before their character is fully ingrained. It thus justifies Aristotle's regarding people as being responsible for their actions, on account of being able to identify good actions and choose them, even if they have not been taught to perform them.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING *PHRONESIS*

In *EN* 1.4, in a passage quoted in Chapter 2, Aristotle claims that in order to begin to study ethics, one has to have 'the that' (*to hoti*), although not necessarily 'the because' (*to dioti*).²²⁸ As we learned in the course of that chapter, according to a number of ancient commentators, and to also Burnyeat and Curzer, having *to hoti* is being able to identify *that an action is good*.²²⁹ Correspondingly, acquiring *to dioti*—which these commentators interpret as referring to understanding *why the identified action is good*²³⁰—is an important reason for the people that already have *to hoti* to study more ethics: they read Aristotle as implying this by quoting Hesiod, 'the best is who knows (*noein*) all things', at the end of 1.4.²³¹ Moreover, acquiring *to dioti* seems to be also connected to developing the virtue of thought *phronesis*,

²²⁷ We learned this from *EN* 2.9 1109a30–b1, discussed on p. 64 above.

²²⁸ See *EN* 1.4 1095b4–8, quoted on p. 56 above.

²²⁹ Burnyeat 1980, pp. 71–2, Curzer 2012, pp. 321–2, and Aspasius, Eustratius, and Heliodorus *ad loc.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Burnyeat 1980, p. 71.

because, as Aristotle says in *EN* 6, *phronesis* does not only command us to perform certain actions as good, but does so on the basis of to the correct conception of the human good.²³² Therefore, as also I concluded in Chapter 2, people must have *to hoti* and be able to identify good actions before they can begin to acquire *phronesis*.

Since both Burnyeat and Curzer endorse similar interpretations with regard to *dioti* and *to hoti* in *EN* 1.4, I used this conclusion in Chapter 2 as my point of departure for a critical assessment of their interstition of the first step of moral development in Aristotle, the step from childhood moral habituation (*ethismos*) to coming to possess *to hoti* and acting well. Now, I would like to proceed to expand, however, the above interpolations about the reference of *to hoti* and *dioti* in *EN* 1.4. For some reason, neither Burnyeat nor Curzer seem to attempt to draw connections between these concepts, and the same concepts in Aristotle's scientific works. I would like to show, however, next that endorsing of Burnyeat and Curzer's, and mine, conclusion about the necessity of *to hoti* for identifying good actions, and thus, for acquiring *phronesis*, would entail that Aristotle's model of acquiring scientific knowledge in the beginning of *An. Post.* 2 should apply *also* to moral knowledge.

We come, says Aristotle, to have scientific knowledge about something by first observing 'that a thing exists (*ei esti*), then figuring out what it is (*ti esti*), that it is an instance of a kind (*to hoti*), and [lastly, by asking] why it is the instance (*to dioti*) of the kind'. Aristotle seems to suggest that this model applies also to moral knowledge:

If we [i.e. once we know that there is such a thing as pride, *ei esti*] were inquiring what is pride (*ti esti*), we should examine the instances of proud men [i.e. *to hoti*], we know of to see what, as such, they have in common; e.g. if Alcibiades was proud, or Achilles and Ajax were proud, we should find on inquiring what they all had in common, that it was intolerance of insult [i.e. *to dioti*] it was this which drove Alcibiades to war, Achilles wrath, and Ajax to suicide.²³³

Though this passage in *An. Post.* 2.13 does not mention the concepts of *to hoti*, *to dioti*, or *ei esti*, in it Aristotle evidently makes use of his model of acquiring scientific

²³² For Aristotle's view that *phronesis* is the virtue of thought enabling people to know why certain actions are good, see esp. *EN* 6.9 1142b25–36 (discussed on p. 128 below), which claims *phronesis* to be excellence in deliberation, ability to construct syllogisms of which universal and particular premises are correct. This entails that a *phronimos* has cognitive access to the correct conception of the good.

²³³ *An. Post.* 2.13 97b15–20.

knowledge. For example Kei Chiba has thus taken the passage to show that ‘these four items (*to hoti*, *to dioti*, *ei esti*, *ti esti*) are supposed to exhaust *any instance of knowledge-seeking activity*, whether [...] inquiry into nature or [...] moral matters’.²³⁴ In spite directing us to think that having *to hoti* should thus come before *to dioti* and *phronesis* in moral development, just as it comes in acquiring scientific knowledge, this interpretation, and the interpretations of Aristotle’s similar remarks in *EN* 1.4 by ancient commentators, Burnyeat and Curzer, are *not* widely endorsed among the interpreters of Aristotle’s moral epistemology. Among them, Aristotle is often taken to think the opposite, that only *phronesis* can identify good actions.²³⁵

We should not assume—the interpreters such as John McDowell, Iakovos Vasiliou, and Thomas Angier seem to think—that Aristotle would agree with the model of *An. Post.* 2.13 in *EN*, because in this work, he stresses the particularity of moral knowledge as opposed to the universality of theoretical, such as astronomical or mathematical, knowledge. By emphasising in *EN* 1.3 that moral matters, unlike the matters that theoretical sciences investigate, ‘admit much variety and fluctuation’ and can be true ‘only for the most part’, the author of *EN* rejects, so they assume, that, e.g., proud people, just actions, or basically anything that is good, have any universal properties in common with everything else belonging to the kind ‘good’.²³⁶ Hence there are no ‘instances of proud men’ in the way that there are instances of, e.g., eclipses or triangles, *pace An. Post.* 2.13, but only *particular* proud people, who show pride in their unique and particular ways. Therefore, since there is no way of knowing who is, e.g., proud or not *prima facie*—on the basis of observing universal properties analogous to the shadow of a celestial object passing the surface of another, or having three angles (i.e. *to hoti*)—one has to use one’s *phronesis*, his understanding of what would be proud behaviour for that particular person in those

²³⁴ Chiba 2012, p. 2.

²³⁵ See e.g. Sherman 1989, Vasiliou 1996, McDowell 2006, and Angier nn

²³⁶ Cf. Leszl 1990, who attempts to challenge this assumption, by pointing out even ethics can involve certain universal principles. E.g. in *EE* 2.11 1227b28-33 (Leszl quotes it in Italian on p. 73), Aristotle says that ‘as in the sciences the assumptions are first principles, so in the practical sciences the end is a starting-point and assumption: since it is required that so-and-so is to be in good health, if that is to be secured it is necessary for such-and-such a thing to be provided—just as in mathematics, if the angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, such and such a consequence necessarily follows.’

particular circumstances (*to dioti*), to arrive at a true discernment of a good action.

The prominence of this line of interpretation—regardless of its unflattering view of the coherence of Aristotle’s claims between *An. Post* 2.13 and *EN* 1.3—stems from the fact that it can offer, as I will explicate below, a psychologically rather attractive account of how one could identify good actions. However, McDowell, Vasiliou, and Angier’s interpretation is incompatible with the reading of *EN* 1.4 that the ancient commentators, Burnyeat, Curzer, and I support, because it must deny any firm link between having *phronesis* and *to dioti*, and claim that already having *to hoti*, ability to identify good actions, requires *phronesis*. Hence my challenge, so as to confirm the plausibility of my preferred interpretation of *EN* 1.4 and thus enable me to proceed to the second part of this Chapter, is to present at least equally psychologically attractive interpretation about identifying good actions. This interpretation will need to show how we might identify them without *phronesis* and *to dioti*—but only with *synesis*—in conformity with the model of *An. Post.* 2.13, while respecting Aristotle’s remarks about the particularity of good actions in *EN*.

3.1 IS NOT *PHRONESIS* IS NECESSARY FOR IDENTIFYING GOOD ACTIONS?

Although McDowell’s interpretation seems to disagree with Aristotle’s words in *An. Post.* 2.13, he is confident that Aristotle nevertheless must think, at least in *EN*, that we can only get to know moral facts (*to dioti*) and be able to identify good actions once we have *phronesis*: that is, when we have an understanding of why they are good (*to hoti*). Apart from apparently respecting what Aristotle says in *EN* 1.3 about the difference between scientific and moral knowledge—in which, unlike in the former, one may suppose, there are no universals, and hence, no possibility for recognising good actions *prima facie* on the basis of universal properties—*pace An. Post.* 2.13, McDowell’s interpretation is also psychologically attractive. We do not characteristically identify good actions by attempting to spot some *prima facie* features that we know make them good regardless of situation—such as producing a sensation of pleasure or being in accordance with moral law. So as to identify an

action as good, we rather attempt to understand what situational features, which may sometimes involve pleasure, or being in accordance with moral law, but also many other, often unpredictable factors, make an action good in a certain situations.²³⁷

According to McDowell, Aristotle notices this ‘uncodifiability’ of moral decision-making. What makes an action good, Aristotle thinks in *EN* 2.6, is its meeting the demands of our particular situation neither excessively nor defectively—hitting ‘the mean relative to us’.²³⁸ Since the mean is relative to us, it does not help us to identify good actions without the understanding of the particular demands of our current situation. ‘*Phronesis* is bound up with action’, concludes Aristotle in *EN* 6.7, ‘and as a result one ought to have knowledge of both [universals and particulars], but more so of the latter’.²³⁹ Because the goodness of an action thus depends upon the demands of a situation, and since everyone’s situation is particular, good actions differ across situations: as Aristotle puts it by means of a famous analogue between moral perception and dietetics in *EN* 2.6, what would be too little food for Milo the wrestler might be too much for a beginner in wrestling.²⁴⁰ McDowell proceeds thus to claim that one cannot identify a truly good course of action in a situation *before* being able to read the demands of the situation: e.g., if we extend Aristotle’s analogue, we must consider whether we are preparing a meal for a professional wrestler or for a beginner, and the dietary requirements of people at the various stages of wrestling training, *etc.*²⁴¹ That is, McDowell seems to assume that one has to first understand why certain action would hit the mean in a situation (i.e. have *to dioti*) so as to identify that action as good in that situation (i.e. have *to hoti*).

Even if we skip *An. Post* 2.13, McDowell’s interpretation may, however, now seem to also disagree the text of *EN*. Granted that identifying good actions is

²³⁷ This view enjoys also wide support in contemporary moral philosophy. As far as I know, only W.D. Ross (e.g. 2002, Ch. 2) has been a clear supporter of the alternative *prima facie* -view that I presented.

²³⁸ See *EN* 1.3 1094b15, in which Aristotle says, ‘fine and just actions admit of much variety and fluctuation’ and *EN* 2.6 1106a25-35 for remark about good actions lying on ‘the mean relative to us’.

²³⁹ *EN* 6.7 1140b20-2 (B&C).

²⁴⁰ See *EN* 2.6 1106a36–b6.

²⁴¹ McDowell 2006, p. 66 cit. Wiggins 1987, p. 231, which presented a similar interpretation earlier. However, only McDowell takes this to be an interpretation of the distinctive function of *phronesis*, and applies it into interpreting Aristotle’s theory of moral development.

impossible *prima facie*, and requires *phronesis*, it would follow that acquiring *phronesis* should not be the epistemic end of moral development, but instead its precondition. For one cannot habituate oneself into acting well and be responsible of it unless one can identify which actions are good. Aristotle seems to think, however, that the epistemic goal of moral development *is* to acquire *phronesis* to complement already developed fine habits—he states in *EN* 6.13 that only *phronesis* can render a good character fully virtuous.²⁴² McDowell suggests, however, that the ability to identify good actions may be only ‘a primitive form’ of *phronesis*.²⁴³ That is, there could be two levels of *phronesis* in Aristotle, an understanding of the moral demands of familiar situations, and a more refined and systematised level in which a person also has, for example, a capacity to articulate those demands, and apply his moral understanding to new and unfamiliar situations. All moral development thus presupposes the former *phronesis*, but virtue comes only upon developing the latter.

But unfortunately for McDowell’s interpretation, Aristotle never makes any a distinction between the supposed levels of *phronesis*. Since virtues are excellences, that is, perfections, he should rather think quite the opposite: that there are no degrees of virtue, that one is either virtuous or not—just as something is either perfect or not. Iakovos Vasiliou has attempted to present an alternative strategy for saving the McDowellian interpretation of identifying good actions. He has argued that most recent interpreters, McDowell included, could be mistaken about the argument at the end of *EN* 1.4, quoted on p. 47 above. Only this interpretative mistake—probably initially made by Burnyeat 1980—could have led McDowell to need to present ungrounded speculations about the existence of ‘primitive’ *phronesis*.

According to Vasiliou, in the passage of *EN* 1.4, Aristotle does not say that one who can identify good actions (who has *to hoti*) *should* also acquire understanding of why they are good (*to dioti*) to complete his moral development; he says only that ‘beginning (*arché*) is *to hoti* and if this is sufficiently apparent to a man, he will not *in addition* have a need for *to dioti*’.²⁴⁴ We should not, argues Vasiliou *pace*

²⁴² See *EN* 6.13 1144b25–33, discussed on p. 21 above.

²⁴³ McDowell 2006, p. 55.

²⁴⁴ *EN* 1.4 1095b7–8.

Burnyeat, put too much weight on Aristotle's ensuing quotation of Hesiod, that 'the best is who knows all things', i.e. also *to dioti*, but instead should focus only on Aristotle's own words, which do not explicitly exhort anyone to acquire *to dioti*. Thus, instead of implicitly thinking that one should first develop 'primitive' *phronesis* in order to identify good actions, and later perfect this into 'perfect' *phronesis*, Aristotle might hold, Vasiliou argues, that once one can identify good actions, one does not need to study anything in order to gain superior *phronesis*, for:

[...] precisely since one who possesses "the that" sufficiently can correctly identify particular actions as being just, courageous, etc. he must already have a grasp of "the because".²⁴⁵

Provided that a person able to identify good actions has no need to cognitively develop any further, as Vasiliou suggests, there is no need to speculate that he might only have the 'primitive form' of *phronesis*. The person can already have full *phronesis* and hence also moral virtue. Aristotle's main reason for advocating listening to lectures on ethics would thus not be for the sake of moral improvement: maybe his famous statement at *EN* 2.2 'that we study ethics not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become good' refers not to the ideal listeners of ethics lectures, *pace* e.g. Burnyeat and Curzer, but only to those who want to become such listeners. The person who can identify good actions, and who thus also has virtue, might well have only epistemic reasons for listening to ethics lectures, such as developing his wisdom (*sophia*) and satisfying his natural desire of knowledge.²⁴⁶

Vasiliou's above interpretation is McDowellian in claiming that even identifying good actions presupposes *phronesis*, but, as we can now see, it succeeds in avoiding disagreeing *EN* 6.13, without relying on McDowell's implausible speculations about the existence of 'primitive' *phronesis*. Vasiliou can also treat *An. Post.* 2.13 as an account of acquiring the kind of moral knowledge that one learn in ethics lectures and that do not have implications to one's moral character. However, although Vasiliou has thus shown a way for the McDowellian interpretation to avoid disagreeing with *EN* 6.13 or skipping *An. Post* 2.13, it seems that two passages in

²⁴⁵ Vasiliou 1996, p. 789.

²⁴⁶ Aristotle famously announces this desire in *Met.* 1.1. 980a21: 'All men by nature desire to know.'

Met. 7.17 and *An. Post.* 2.19, in which Aristotle clarifies his model for acquiring *to dioti*, and which Vasiliou does not study, cast doubt also on his interpretation:

Met. 7.17: *To dioti* is always sought in this form—“why does one thing belong to some other?” For to inquire why the musical man is a musical man, is either to inquire—as we have said why the man is musical or something else. Now ‘why *to hoti* is itself’ is a meaningless inquiry, for *to hoti* or the existence of the thing must be evident—e.g. that the moon is eclipsed.²⁴⁷

A. Post. 2.19: When one of a number of logically indiscriminable particulars has made a stand, the earliest universal is present in the soul: for though the act of sense-discernment is of the particular, its *content* is universal: a man, for example, instead of only Callias. A fresh stand is made among these tentative universals, and the process does not cease until the indivisible concepts or the true universal are established: e.g. such and such a species of animal is a step towards the genus animal, which by the same process is a step towards a further generalization.²⁴⁸

Aristotle states in the passage of *Met.* 7.7 that before one can ask why e.g. a man is musical or the moon is eclipsed, the existence of a musical man or the fact that moon is eclipsed must be ‘evident’ to him. The identification that the moon is eclipsed, that a man is musical or someone is a man *etc.*, is *evident*—Aristotle elucidates in *An. Post.* 2.19—*through the sense-discernment of the particular*.²⁴⁹ We can identify that someone is a man instead of only Callias merely by perception, that is, *prima facie* and without needing any antecedent knowledge of why he is a man, *pace* Vasiliou and McDowell.²⁵⁰ Although good actions may differ from many other facts on account of their lacking any fully universal properties on the basis of which they could be identified as good *prima facie*, also they contain at least a conceptual universal—the concept of ‘good.’ Such universals, says Aristotle in *An. Post.* 2.19, are already ‘contained’ in particular identifications. The ‘containment’ that Aristotle

²⁴⁷ *Met.* 7.17 1141a10–16.

²⁴⁸ *An. Post.* 2.19 100a15–b3. Cf. similar views in 100b4, 100b5, 100a5–9 and 100a17.

²⁴⁹ As e.g. Barnes 1975 notes on p. 255, Aristotle nowhere explains what the universal being *evident in particular* means, only that this is so. I think that the philosopher’s insistence might be connected to his possible solution of the problem of universals in *Met Z*: although forms are universals, particular substances could be also be forms (which they have to be in virtue of being non-material, as any matter is an attribute) if their essences were forms, i.e., were the universal forms *in particular substances*.

²⁵⁰ Cf. *A. Post.* 2.19 100a5–9: Developing a skill starts ‘from the complete universal that has come to rest in soul.’ This seems to say that experience gives some universals *in itself*, such as man, chair, house, brick etc. from which we can start to develop our abilities to work with them. *Met.* 1.1 981a5–12 adds that skill comes when one *krisis* about similar objects is formed: to have *krisis* that x helped to Callias’ disease is the task of experience, whereas to have *krisis* that x helps to all people having a certain kind of disease belongs to skill. Thus, to apply Aristotle’s previous claim, we first learn e.g. that this house that is made of bricks withstands weather, and once we know that it is on account of being made of bricks that any house withstands weather, we have (an element of) a builder’s skill.

has in mind seems to be a logical relation. Any term of kind, e.g. ‘man’ or ‘eclipse’, is universal insofar as it is a universal concept regardless of whether it refers only to a particular thing or also to a universal kind. Since ‘good’ is also a term of kind, what Aristotle says here should thus apply also to it as well, even though he does not explicitly claim so. Provided that the conceptual universal ‘good’ is analogous to the universal ‘man’ in this sense, we should be able to identify good actions in the same way as we identify ‘men’—by perception that renders them immediately evident for us. This seems to imply that before one can ask why an action is good—inquire for *to dioti*—it has to be evident to him that the action is good—he must have *to hoti*.

Aristotle also indicates in the passage of *An. Post* 2.19 that the conceptual universal contained in any particular identification can become ‘true’ universal only once we discover under which universal kinds a particular perceived thing, e.g. man, eclipse, or good, belongs, and under which *other* universal kinds those kinds belong *etc.* Thus, by ‘true’ universals, Aristotle seems to mean *ultimate* universals, which can ground our identifications of things by giving the last reachable answer to all ‘why’-questions that one may raise about them, e.g. why do you think that Callias is a man? Why do you think this is an eclipse? Why do you think this action is good?

3.2 HOW COULD SYNESIS ALONE IDENTIFY GOOD ACTIONS?

Met. 7.17 and *An. Post.* 2.19 have now given us some reasons for thinking that even if Aristotle were a moral particularist, he would not necessarily need to assume, *pace* McDowell and Vasiliou, that one needs to understand why certain actions are good in order to identify them as good. For the concept of good could be contained in a *prima facie* identification of a particular good action in the same way that the concept of man is contained in our *prima facie* perception of a particular man. Just as we do not need to understand what makes someone a man in order to perceive him as a man, perhaps we don’t need to understand why an action is good in order to identify it as good. In brief, we can use the terms of kind without knowing what features constitute the kind, namely the true universals. Thus we would not need to acquire understanding in virtue of which features a particular belongs to a certain

kind—to *dioti*—in order to only identify the particular—to *hoti*. In order to develop such understanding about, say, men, as in the example of *An. Post* 2.19, we would need to study some biology and metaphysics, so maybe also achieving moral understanding (*phronesis*) would require attending lectures in ethics, *pace* Vasilou.

There may, however, be a disparity in above analogue between the visual perception of particulars without yet understanding their specific *to dioti* and identifying good actions without *phronesis*. Aristotle is clear in *DA* that visual perception is generally reliable, and thus it is reliable even without sufficient understanding of *to dioti* for defining the perceptions.²⁵¹ What a person without sufficient knowledge of biology and metaphysics sees as a man is very likely to be a man. However, it is an open question if a person without moral understanding can *reliably* identify good actions. Although Curzer has given space for this possibility in his interpretation of Aristotle's theory of early moral development, and even though Aristotle's text in *EN* 6.10—studied in section 2.5 above—*Met.* 7.17 and *An. Post.* 2.19 shows that he admits this possibility, we would need also answer a question about reliability in order to establish that Aristotle's *synesis* allows us to reliably identify good actions—not only to make more or less accurate guesses—without yet profoundly understanding why they are good. Only this conclusion would suffice to refute McDowellian interpretations about identifying good actions—apart from showing that *synesis*, as I argued in Chapter 2, can be a psychological basis for our moral responsibility, as it could enable us to choose which actions to consider good.

I think that we might find such a conclusion in Aristotle. In order to find out, we would need to ask how reliable *synesis*—the ability to identify good actions without knowledge of why they are good, just as we can visually discern that moon is eclipsed or that someone is a man *etc.* without having any justification for why we perceive them as we do—could be, in light of Aristotle's text. In *EN* 6.10, in which he discusses *synesis*, quoted on pp. 62-3 above, the philosopher does not, however, venture to discuss the reliability of *synesis*, although he clearly assumes that it is

²⁵¹ See esp. *DA* 3. 3, 428a5ff: perception of proper *sensibilia* (such as colours in the case of sight) never errs. However, *phantasia*, of which one task is to synthesise perceptions of e.g. men from the proper perceptions of various senses can err, as we concluded in Chapter 1.

reliable—otherwise he presumably would not have remarked that ‘rendering [moral] discernment nobly’ is the characteristic function of *synesis*. If not explicit in his discussion of *synesis*, his views about learning crafts may, however, help us to understand why we should consider *synesis* reliable. For he considers the operation of *synesis* to be displayed in learning, and we have seen, on p. 45 above, that in *EN 2* he regards moral learning as analogous to craft learning.²⁵² Therefore we should perhaps turn next to *Met.* 1.1, in which he suggests how craftsmen can perform their tasks reliably without understanding, however, why certain tasks are performed in certain instead of some other ways (i.e. to have *to dioti*) in their respective crafts:

Besides, we think that the master workers in each craft are more honourable and know in a truer sense and are wiser than manual workers, because they know *to dioti* [...]; thus we view them as being wiser not in virtue of being able to act, but of having the theory for themselves and knowing the causes. And in general it is a sign of the man who knows and of the man who does not know, that the former can teach, and therefore we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for master craftsmen can teach, and men of mere experience cannot.²⁵³

Aristotle states here that a master craftsman (*architecton*) must understand the explanations for the things that are done (*to dioti*) in his craft (*techne*) in order to do his craft well and to pass it on to new generation of craftsmen. However, interestingly, in the passage Aristotle says also that the master might not perform craft tasks any better than an ordinary craftsman (*technites*) who only has experience (*empereia*). This may mean that mere experience in doing craft tasks, not only a master's understanding, can give one sufficient resources for succeeding in one's craft—probably cognitively the most important of these is the ability to reliably identify actions that one should perform in order to complete the craft tasks (*to hoti*).

In light of Aristotle's analogy in *EN 2* about the similarity of craft- and moral learning, this conclusion should also apply to his moral epistemology. Just as one can become a good craftsman by only acquiring experience in their crafts, people might come to be able to identify good actions also through only acquiring relevant experience. If a craftsman does not need the master's understanding of why certain

²⁵² See *EN* 2.1 1103b7ff.

²⁵³ *Met* 1.1 980b24–981a12.

tasks are done in a certain way in order to see how to do them successfully, why would a moral learner need to understand why good actions are good in order to identify them? Instead, he might need another cognitive achievement: *experience*.

We should not, however, make too hasty conclusions. In a recent book, Tom Angier has signalled that the above rhetorical question might not yet persuade a supporter of the McDowellian interpretation. Angier claims that moral experience must differ significantly from craft experience, despite what Aristotle says about their similarity in *EN 2*. Developing the ability to identify good actions must, says Angier, be a very different process to craft learning. Only in the case of crafts the ability to identify proper actions can develop before the understanding of *to dioti*:

It is not difficult to conceive many *technai* as incorporating a long initial period of more or less routine, largely imitative learning, in which apprentices are made to follow practical instructions without being apprised of the theoretical information that would shed light on their activity at a cognitively more sophisticated level.²⁵⁴

But this experience vs. understanding dichotomy could not hold with moral learning:

It is not easy to envisage such a separation applying in the case of moral learning. For in the latter context, there seems no possibility of an equivalent division between theory and practice, and hence no equivalent to the way in which craft-learners can adequately navigate the complexities of their respective *technai*, without having been exposed to their specific *dioiti*.²⁵⁵

The concept of experience cannot be analogous in the domains of moral- and craft learning, according to Angier. One can perhaps learn to perform certain simple craft tasks, such as making bricks, by repeating the same actions time after time—in this case, the experience does not involve understanding—but one cannot establish a repetitive routine in order to ensure that one acts well, because, as we learned from McDowell, every moral situation is entirely particular. Therefore a moral learner's experience must involve an understanding of *to dioti* from early on. Hence Angier concludes: 'whatever the merits of Aristotle's understanding of the crafts and craft-

²⁵⁴ Angier 2010, pp. 124–5.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

models *per se*—it is in the application of these to the sphere of virtues that their cogency gives way'.²⁵⁶ If we thus abstain from putting weight to the analogue between learning crafts and virtue in *EN 2*, we could also reject the relevance of Aristotle's views about the possibility of *to hoti* coming without *dioti* in *Met 7.17* to his moral epistemology, and safely return to the McDowellian interpretation.

Although this may seem an uncharitable conclusion, in any case we must concede to Angier that learning crafts might involve at least some mechanical repetition, where moral learning does not.²⁵⁷ So we cannot easily rule out the possibility that Angier is right in thinking that Aristotle's associating moral learning with craft learning in *EN 2* does not imply that he genuinely regards the experiences of moral and craft learning as similar.²⁵⁸ The philosopher might have simply chosen an inappropriate comparison. I think, however, that *even if* those experiences were not similar, this might not imply that identifying good actions requires understanding why certain actions are good (*to dioti*), that is—since such understanding belongs to *phronesis*—the virtue of *phronesis*. Aristotle would nevertheless have resources for explaining how people can identify good actions (*to hoti*). The attraction of this interpretation is that it would allow us to consider Aristotle's theory of acquiring knowledge of *to hoti* without understanding *to dioti* in *A. Post. 2.13* and *Met 7.17* to be operative also in his moral epistemology. I would therefore like to begin to unveil a theoretical account that Aristotle could have given about the operation of *synesis* without making assumptions about similarities between the experiences of craft and moral learning. Moreover, I would also like to show that if we took this possible explanation to be correct, then we could see that his analogy between learning crafts and good actions in *EN 2*, with the complementing *Met 7.17*, should not be dismissed

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ One may think that learning good manners, which Aristotle (although not many contemporary philosophers) would probably consider a variety of moral learning, is mechanical. However, as Herman 2005 has argued in studying the Stoics, learning good manners is not mechanical, since manners are 'critical elements of doing what is appropriate' (p. 286)—and one can come to recognize what is appropriate in a situation through experiencing situations, just as with good actions.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Annas 2011, Ch. 3, who, in order to preserve the analogue, has introduced several qualifications for the crafts to which it is applied: a craft, in order to qualify for the analogy, has to be learned from experts, involve a need to understand why it is practiced, and aspiration towards acquiring expertise. Aristotle does not, however, anywhere introduce such qualifications, so I cannot use Annas' strategy,

as irrelevant to his theory of moral development. Instead of pointing to a similarity between learning experiences, it may point out that both craft and moral learners, despite their possibly different experiences, need to attend to the opinions of experts.

3.2.1 Identifying the Instances of Natural Kinds

At least in contemporary epistemology, it is widely considered possible to reliably identify things as belonging to certain kinds without knowing why they belong to them. This development can be traced back to Hilary Putnam, who argued in the mid-1970s that people can reliably identify instances of natural kinds without knowing the definition of them, simply by perceiving them, and recognizing them as instances of some already-identified kind. For example, we can identify a certain liquid as water without knowing why it is water (i.e. because it is H₂O), by perceiving its similarity with the liquid that people generally call water.²⁵⁹ This identification is reliable, so that what we identify as ‘water’ *is* water, because we know that instances of the liquid people call ‘water’ on the basis of their perception, just as all natural kinds, are definable as on the grounds of having certain fixed, scientifically discoverable features (such as being H₂O), which we may not know.²⁶⁰

Martha Nussbaum remarked in 1980s that Aristotle’s epistemology might work like Putnam’s theory, which he calls ‘internal realism’.²⁶¹ However, apart from this brief comment, he does not pursue this interpretative thread any further. Linda Zagzebski, however, has recently attempted to apply Putnam’s internal realism to moral epistemology. She has suggested that apart from providing us with theory for identifying instances of natural kinds, it could also explain how we can identify good people. Although Zagzebski does not discuss Aristotle, we might examine whether Aristotle could have agreed with her conclusions, which I quote below:

²⁵⁹ See Putnam 1975, esp. pp. 140–2.

²⁶⁰ Charles (2002), p. 11, summarises Putnam’s view on our epistemic assumptions as follows: ‘(1) Water (or gold etc. natural kind) has an (as yet unknown) fundamental feature, of a type grasped by scientists, which determines its other features, (2) Water has one and the same feature in all possible worlds in which it exists which fixes the identity of the kind and. (3) The (as yet unknown) fundamental scientific feature (specified in (1)) is the feature (mentioned in (2)) which fixes the identity of water in all possible worlds in which it exists’.

²⁶¹ See Nussbaum, 1986, p. 312.

Good persons are persons like *that*, just as gold is stuff like *that*. [...] In fact, it is not necessary that anybody know what makes a good person good (i.e. ‘the because’) in order to successfully refer to good persons any more than it was necessary that anybody knew what makes water to successfully refer to water before the advent of molecular theory. [...] As with natural kinds like gold or water, people can succeed in referring to the good person as long as they, or some people in their community can pick out exemplars.²⁶²

Zagzebski suggests that we might identify good people without understanding why they are good, just as we can identify natural kinds such as water without knowing the scientific properties that determine that it is water. Good people, Zagzebski suggests, can be identified on the basis of ‘the emotion of admiration’, just as identifying a certain liquid as water can be made on the basis of sense perception, because we characteristically only admire people who are good, just as we characteristically call only liquid that has certain scientifically-discoverable features water.²⁶³ Zagzebski’s suggestion that the power of the emotion of admiration can help us to reliably identify good people seems to put her, however, at odds with Aristotle, who acknowledges that many people whom we consider good on the basis of our emotions are not really good. E.g. in *EN* 6.5 he says: ‘we suppose that Pericles and the people of that sort have *phronesis*’,²⁶⁴ although politicians in general, as he makes clear in *Pol.* (possibly echoing Plato’s criticism of Pericles in *Gorgias*) are far from being virtuous, but only excellent at manipulating other people’s emotions.²⁶⁵

Thus Aristotle does not seem to be an internal realist about identifying virtuous people. But could he be an internal realist about identifying good actions? The answer also seems to be no. Provided that McDowell is right about what the particularity of good actions implies, that there are *no* certain universal properties that all good actions share, and so we cannot make similar epistemic assumptions about them as we can make with e.g. water: that they share a certain universal

²⁶² Zagzebski 2012, p. 158.

²⁶³ Zagzebski 2012, p. 159.

²⁶⁴ *EN* 6.5 1140b8–9. Cf. Aubenque 1963, p. 46, and Berti 2008b, p. 16, who assume that Aristotle refers to himself with ‘we’, and considers Pericles a *phronimos*. Neither of them explains, however, why, then, he is so critical towards populist politicians like Pericles in *Pol.* 5.5 (see fn. 263 below).

²⁶⁵ See *Pol.* 5.5 in which Aristotle criticises democracy on the basis that it tends to lead to tyranny, because people tend to vote good and charismatic speakers, who conceal tyrannical intentions under great promises, to rule them, i.e. let them to manipulate their emotions. Cf. *Gorgias* 515e-16a.

property that makes them good. At most, we can metaphorically illustrate that good actions respond to the moral demands of situations, or, hit the mean relative to us. Hence there is no basis for us to assume that our identifications of virtuous actions are reliable, unless we already know why a certain action would be good. I think that this consideration, which seems to altogether prevent the attribution of Putnam-style ‘internal realism’ to Aristotle, might have made recent scholars cautious of accepting Nussbaum’s remark, or even studying whether it may contain even a kernel of truth

In his 2001 book, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*, David Charles has, however, proposed that Aristotle could be a *different* type of internal realist to Putnam, ‘according to [whose] account, one can understand the term water as a natural-kind term without having [*pace* Putnam] any views as to whether water possesses a fundamental scientific feature’ (i.e. a fixed universal property).²⁶⁶ If we regard this conclusion of Charles’ book-length interpretation of *A. Post 2*—which I do not have space to fully review here—as essentially correct, we could explain how people can identify particular good actions without reading the demands of situations first. Provided that people could identify instances of natural kinds, without knowing that natural kinds must have some fixed scientific features that define them, maybe they could also identify particular good actions that do not share any universal properties.

Aristotle may think, suggests Charles, that we can consider the identifications of instances of natural kinds reliable if those identifications are supported by a master craftsman’s expertise. Recall the passage in *Met 1.1*, according to which one task of the master craftsman is to teach others, and compare it with a famous line from *EN 6.11*: ‘the *phronimoi* [...] have an eye of experience, they see correctly’.²⁶⁷ Charles attempts to establish an analogue between *Met 1.1* and Aristotle’s ocular metaphor:

First, without the master craftsman's understanding of kinds, we would be like those who are colour blind: unable to see what is there. As we need a properly functioning visual system to grasp colours, so we need the master craftsman's understanding to latch on to kinds. As the former does not undermine the realism of our colour judgements, so the latter need not undermine the status of our judgements about kinds.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ See Charles 2000, p. 15.

²⁶⁷ *EN 6.11 1143b13*.

²⁶⁸ Charles 2000, p. 360.

The very notion of a ‘kind’ may derive from the perceptions of a master craftsman, argues Charles, ‘for kinds, as we understand them, are ones of the type involved in our craft engagement with the world’.²⁶⁹ That is, we speak of gold as a natural kind, not because we assume that all instances of the material we call as gold share some scientifically-discoverable property, but because we see that a master goldsmith could perform his work successfully provided that he considers only a certain kind of material as gold.²⁷⁰ The master craftsman, Charles writes, ‘grasps what can and cannot be done with the objects he confronts, and aims to learn where limitations in what can be done stem from him and where from the nature of the kind itself, such that no extension of his skill could change it. The nature of the kind is that what makes some things possible and others impossible for him’.²⁷¹ Should the master goldsmith consider, for example, not only that specific kind, but also something that is actually pyrite, as gold, he would fail at his work, which is not characteristic to some we consider a master, as this other material would melt at a different point and have a different malleability, *etc.* Thus, if we are uncertain about whether some material is gold, we can rely on a master goldsmith—whether he identifies that material as gold or not can be our epistemic basis for whether we regard it as gold.

As we now see how one might identify instances of natural kinds without having knowledge of the scientific features that they must have, perhaps we can proceed to the issue of identifying good actions, as also Charles applies his interpretation to it:

There are several heroes (and heroines) elsewhere in Aristotle's thought whose role corresponds to that of the master craftsman. The virtuous know how to act and can explain why they act in that way, but need not know the fundamental principles concerning human well-being, which make their mode of action correct. Indeed, they may have no view as to whether there are any underlying principles of this type.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Here I replace ‘water’ with ‘gold’, which is Putnam’s another example (Putnam 1975, p. 155–6), because I consider it more illuminating in this context. For identifying gold reliably requires master craftsmanship, unlike identifying water, which even unskilled people can reliably identify. Hence it is not intuitive to call a person who can identify water across situations ‘a master craftsman’. Since identifying *any* natural kind, even water, requires, however, *some* experience, the difference in the degree of expertise does not affect Charles’ argument, which only assumes that mere experience, instead of any scientific knowledge, suffices for fixing the identities of instances of natural kinds.

²⁷¹ Charles 2000, p. 3.

²⁷² Charles 2000, p. 155.

I think this view is essentially correct—provided that we replace Charles’ virtuous people with the people of *synesis* (*synetoi*). Like Vasiliou, Charles seems to assume that *phronesis*, and hence the moral virtue that comes with it according to *EN* 6.13, is needed for identifying good actions. But since a *phronimos* evidently understands why good actions are good (*to dioti*)—even according to Vasiliou—Charles seems to be mistaken in thinking that the *phronimos* does *not* need such understanding. I would therefore associate people’s ability to identify good actions with *synesis* instead of *phronesis*. The latter might only be needed to justify those identifications.

Now, in *EN* 6.10, we have seen Aristotle establish that *synesis* is the ability to reliably identify good actions on the basis of other people’s opinions. If people can confirm whether some material is, for example, gold or not by consulting master craftsmen, it might be that they could also reliably identify good actions by consulting other, possibly more experienced people’s opinions. In this case, we would not need to assume, without explicit support from Aristotle’s text, that identifying good actions involves *phronesis*. Thus we could show the McDowellian interpretation—which argues for the necessity of *phronesis* for identifying good actions—to be mistaken, without even appealing to the passage in *EN* 2.1, in which Aristotle argues that moral learning is similar to craft learning, which does not involve *phronesis* according to *Met* 1.1. Hence we could agree (or remain neutral) with Angier’s argument, presented in section 3.2 above, that Aristotle cannot mean that these two learning experiences are similar, because performing some craft tasks (such as making bricks) can be very routine, in a way that acting well never is. We could even expand Angier’s argument and suggest that, by the comparison, Aristotle may not be implying that learning to be good is a similar experience to learning to be a craftsman, which, as Angier’s argument shows, might be a problematic implication. He may only mean that that both moral and craft learners, whose learning experiences could differ considerably in their cognitive depth, acquire the ability to identify good actions by consulting other people’s moral opinions.²⁷³

²⁷³ Cf. *EN* 2.1 1130a32, in which Aristotle says that the habituation is only the *first* stage of moral development: ‘virtues we come to have by engaging in the (like) activities first’. This implies that

3.2.2 Identifying Good Actions Reliably with *Synesis*

This conclusion, inspired by the conclusions of Charles' interpretation of *A. Post.*, may, however, seem too straightforward. Unlike learning what gold is through consulting master goldsmiths, for example, or more cognitively modestly, what water is through consulting people who have had some experience with water *etc.*, learning to identify good actions solely through consulting other people may seem to risk being unreliable. People who have a reputation for being masters in their crafts tend to be reliable guides, for if a goldsmith with the reputation of master only pretended to be able to tell gold from pyrite, he would fail in his craft. Likewise, with natural kinds, such as water, with which everyone deals on a daily basis, we can rely on almost anyone's identifications about instances of them. However, if even many people whom we admire as virtuous might not be actually virtuous, but only good at manipulating other people's emotions, as we have registered Aristotle acknowledge in *Pol.* (see p. 97 above) could anything then stop us from inadvertently appealing to unreliable moral opinions in identifying good actions? Although everyone has to deal with good and bad actions all the time, just as they deal with, for example, water all the time, Aristotle seems to think that there is no similar guarantee about people's opinions on moral actions—not even publicly admired people's opinions. Yet he seems to be convinced that although any particular person, or a group of people, can provide unreliable moral guidance, as a whole, people's moral opinions are reliable.

Unless Aristotle was confident in the overall reliability of *synesis*, he presumably would not have written, for example, the following about the people we admire:

The good man judges each class of things rightly, and in each the truth appears (*phainetai*) to him. For each state of character have its own ideas of the noble (*to kalon*) and of the pleasant. And perhaps the good man differs from others mostly by about each of these things, beings as it were the norm (*kanôn*) and the measure (*metron*) of them.²⁷⁴

moral development involves at least one additional stage such as, perhaps, learning from more experienced people's example and opinions. If learning crafts is analogous to moral learning, as Aristotle also claims in the same chapter, the same should hold true with regard to crafts as well.

²⁷⁴ EN 3.4 1113a30–4 (R).

Since Aristotle assigns authority in matters of pleasure and nobility to good people while maintaining that many people we consider good are not actually so—for ‘moral weakness distorts [us], and causes [us], to be deceived’²⁷⁵—he must think in this passage that non-virtuous people can trust in the people they consider good *in general*, although not necessarily exclusively in any particular person. Similarly, despite that any particular non-virtuous person is potentially deceivable, more vulnerable to bad pleasures and mistaken conceptions of noble ends than a virtuous person—since they do not understand why good actions are good—he thinks that, on the whole, they can reliably identify good actions. He implies in the beginning of *EN* 7.7 that only vicious persons characteristically fail to identify good actions by stating that most people are somewhere in between the akratic and enkratic types of character, though more inclined towards the former, and that the categorical difference between those types and vice is that *only* vicious people consciously choose pursuing sensual pleasures over everything else.²⁷⁶ The rest, most people, choose good actions correctly in their opinions, even if they do not always act well.

Synesis could thus operate by presenting one with the people’s consensus about the goodness of available courses of—i.e. ‘is this what other people would approve of doing in my situation?’ Since being recommended by most other people does not, however, make any action good, one might thus identify good actions (*to hoti*) without having any understanding (*to dioti*) of why the action is ultimately good: because it realises *eudaimonia*. We have seen Aristotle note a similar possibility in *A. Post* 2.19 100a15–b3, quoted on p. 78 above, in which he remarked that an universal concept, e.g. man, can be contained in a particular identification, and we can thus perceive particulars as belonging to kinds. E.g., we can identify Callias as a man, *prima facie*, without understanding what features ultimately make Callias a man.

²⁷⁵ *EN* 6.12 1144a33–5.

²⁷⁶ Aristotle implies so in *EN* 7.7 1150a18–22 (R): ‘[T]he man who pursues the excesses of things pleasant, or pursues to excess necessary objects, and does so by choice, for their own sake and not at all for the sake of any result distinct from them is self-indulgent [i.e. vicious]’. Right after this passage, he states that the vicious person’s corrupted choice makes him distinct from, and worse than akratic.

3.3 LATER MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ACQUISITION OF *PHRONESIS*

We have now established how *synesis* might operate: by recognising good actions through appealing to the moral opinions of other people. Although Aristotle admits that many of their moral opinions are defective, nevertheless, on the whole, most people are right about which actions are good. But we have not yet studied how the epistemic step from having *synesis* to the virtue of *phronesis* can be realised. *Phronesis* is necessary for moral virtue, for moral virtue is not only performing the actions that *synesis* identifies as good for whatever reason—for avoiding shame or receiving pleasure or honour *etc*—but performing them *because* they are good in themselves.²⁷⁷ In order to be able to act from this *right* reason (*meta tou orthou logou*), one needs, we have registered Aristotle to remind us in *EN* 6, to develop *phronesis*, which is basically the ability to deliberate excellently what is good for human beings.²⁷⁸ We have come to know that acquiring *phronesis* thus involves learning a correct conception of the human good, coming to act from the right reason, and—since only *phronimos* consistently understand what is good for humans and why—coming to deliberate excellently about actions.²⁷⁹ But we have not studied how a person with *synesis* shall acquire *phronesis*. In order to be ready for that task, he needs, as *EN* 1.4 has made clear, to have a fine habits, to consistently perform the actions that his *synesis* has indicated as good. So far, we have seen Aristotle to only tell in that same chapter that listening lectures in ethics can perhaps contribute to developing understanding why certain actions are good in the finely habituated people,²⁸⁰ and that that *phronimoi* tend to be more experienced in than other people in matters of action.²⁸¹ Apart from these remarks, we do not know, however, what the developmental contribution of the teaching of ethics and the experience of life to reaching these cognitive achievements, and to the acquisition of *phronesis*, is.

²⁷⁷ See footnote 44 on p. 22 above for references.

²⁷⁸ See *EN* 6.4 1140a30.

²⁷⁹ See p. 22 above for the first two conclusions, and fn. 135 on 48 above for the last one.

²⁸⁰ See pp. 51-52 above.

²⁸¹ See e.g. *EN* 6.11 1143b6–14, quoted on p. 98 below.

Since Aristotle only ever announces teaching and experience as the factors affecting in the development of *phronesis* for finely habituated people, we may think that *phronesis* results *primarily* either from listening teaching, or from experience in acting well. In the former case, (1) a *synetos* would learn to act from the right reason through listening to lectures in ethics; in the latter case, (2) attending Aristotle's lectures would perhaps help to enable a person who has already learned to act from the right reason through experience to articulate his moral knowledge to others, to teach ethics. A third alternative would be that (3) *phronesis* comes *equally* from teaching and experience, that listening to ethics lectures would, for example, help one to learn the importance of acting from the right reason from his own moral experience, and that this informed experience would further reinforce the motivation to attend to those lectures, until one naturally acts from the right reason in any situation. So far, scholars who have studied this question seem have, however, favoured either of the first two alternatives.²⁸² Let me try to show, however, through studying two first alternative lines of interpretation, that the third alternative interpretation turns out as the probably most plausible interpretation of Aristotle's view on the contribution of teaching and experience to the development of *phronesis*.

Burnyeat can be taken as an example of the first interpretation. According to him, habituation, or doing as one is told to do, prepares a person to enter to lectures on ethics, attending which should teach him to understand why certain actions are good, to acquire *phronesis*. Moral habituation is important, because this cannot be taught to just anyone, 'for some, perhaps most, people's basic desires are already so corrupted that no amount of argument will bring them to see that virtue is desirable in and for itself'.²⁸³ Moral habituation gives one the proper frame of mind for listening to ethics teaching: when we, as habituated people, enter ethical lectures, Aristotle, Burnyeat

²⁸² Most scholars of Aristotle's ethics have not studied this question as I present it; of the scholars I have read, only Burnyeat (1981), Sherman (1989), Kristjansson (2007), Lawrence (2011) and Curzer (2012) have. Kristjansson, according to whom *phronesis* arises in habituated people 'primarily through verbal instruction' (p. 23, italics mine) and Curzer, who thinks one 'acquires the knowledge of the happy life by teaching, after habituation has produced good dispositions of action and passion' (p. 351, italics mine) side with Burnyeat (whose interpretation I study below) and the first answer presented above. Sherman, who says that '*experience* in [...] choice-making will develop *phronesis*' (p. 175, italics mine), would agree with Lawrence (also whose interpretation I study) and the second answer.

²⁸³ Burnyeat p. 81.

claims, ‘will encourage us to think about our life as whole, to arrive at reasoned view of the good for man’.²⁸⁴ In *EN* 2.3, Aristotle says that ‘there are three objects of pursuit: the pleasant, the useful and the noble (*to kalon*) (viz. good acting)’,²⁸⁵ of which only the first we naturally desire from birth. Habituation gets people to initially pursue virtue by gradually making acting well to feel pleasant to them. Teaching habituated people *why* what feels pleasant to them is also just and right will eventually lead them to develop *phronesis*, understand why certain acting is good.²⁸⁶

In opposition to Burnyeat, Gavin Lawrence, who has recently introduced the second interpretation, has argued that not teaching, but the experience of performing good actions is the key to developing *phronesis*. Acting from the right reason does not presuppose any theoretical, articulated understanding why good actions are good, but only the experience of life.²⁸⁷ One can thus have *phronesis* without ever having learned why good actions are good. Lawrence suggests, however, that the *phronesis* that does not include any theoretical component is not yet full and ‘architectonic’ *phronesis*; it is not a true moral understanding of why good actions are good.²⁸⁸ Lawrence sketches, moreover, how even an architectonic *phronesis* could develop through experience only. Once an already *phronimos* agent has enough experience:

[O]n the basis of their many experiences, the agent induces from particular instances to universals—in such universal induction, they abstract out the supposed colloquial element to something of the form: Such and such benefits/is healthy for those in such and such condition.²⁸⁹

Lawrence cites *Met* 1.1 and *EN* 10.9 1180b14–16 in favour of his claim that a person can be *phronimos* without having the above inductive ability, but only with this

²⁸⁴ Burnyeat, p. 82.

²⁸⁵ *EN* 2.3 1104b30. For the equivocality of the noble and acting well, see footnote 44 on p. 22 above.

²⁸⁶ See Burnyeat, p. 74 and 79.

²⁸⁷ Lawrence 2011, p. 43.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Aristotle describes this enthymematic method of induction in *Rhet.* 3.25 1402b16–18. He says in 1403a6–10 that its conclusions can be refuted either by showing that a different conclusion can be reached on the basis of some other particular cases or that the present case is dissimilar to the particular cases that prove the conclusion. Making abstractions from particulars, of which conclusions cannot be easily refuted with either method, requires enormous experience in particular cases, and hence Lawrence may be justified in thinking that only the wisest people can make them successfully.

ability is the person's *phronesis* fully developed such that he can teach virtue to others. The former passage, quoted on p. 93 above, tells us, as we know, that a craftsman can perform his tasks well without having justification (*to dioti*) for them, but acquiring the justifications enables him to teach his craft to others. In the latter passage, Aristotle likewise writes that, 'it does not belong to any chance person to inculcate a good disposition in whoever happens to be set before him, rather, if this belongs to anyone, it would be to a knower (of the universals), just as with medicine'. If we accept Lawrence's interpretation about the degrees of *phronesis* (and ignore *synesis*, which Lawrence does not study) the former passage now may seem to support a view that a sufficient level of *phronesis* for being a good person, the degree that enables him to act well, is the ability to identify good actions, although the architectonic degree of *phronesis*, which would enable him to also teach others and acquire moral virtue, requires understanding why those actions are good.

Let us now attempt to establish whether Burnyeat or Lawrence's interpretation is more plausible. According to Lawrence, we can acquire *phronesis* through only moral habituation, whereas Burnyeat proposes that finely habituated people can acquire *phronesis* only through attending lectures on ethics. The two interpreters have, however, different conceptions about at which stage of moral development one can acquire *phronesis*. Burnyeat thinks, as we have seen, that only what Lawrence would call architectonic *phronesis* is *phronesis*, whereas Lawrence would also allow a person with only a finely-habituated character to count as having *phronesis*, albeit imperfectly, because he still lacks an understanding of why good actions are good, which Burnyeat interprets as an essential feature of *phronesis*. Hence both Lawrence and Burnyeat eventually agree that we could learn to act well as a result of moral habituation. However, while the former thinks, in line with Curzer, that habituation does not presuppose anyone's telling the student which actions to perform as good, the latter thinks that such basic teaching is required. We have, however, already concluded that Burnyeat's view is implausible on pp. 64–5 above: this would imply that we have not rationally chosen which kind of characters to develop, and hence could not justifiably be regarded as responsible for our actions. So, with regard to this interpretative issue, we have a good reason to prefer Lawrence's interpretation.

Where developing the architectonic form of *phronesis*, or the one and only *phronesis* according to Burnyeat, is concerned, Lawrence maintains that only further experience in acting well (apart from earlier moral habituation) suffices to develop understanding of why certain actions are good. On the other hand, Burnyeat's interpretation is that an already finely-habituated person needs to only attend lectures in ethics to develop it. As we saw in Chapter 2, developing moral understanding brings a profound transformation to the person's *moral*: while the ability of *synesis*, that virtually everyone possesses, identifies good actions on the basis of other people's opinions, *phronesis* identifies them on the basis of accurately perceiving the demands of particular situations. While a *synetos* has to ask questions such as 'is *phi*-ing what other people would approve of doing in my situation?' in order to identify a good action,²⁹⁰ a *phronimos* perceives whether *phi*-ing would hit the mean in his situation or not—which is what justifies why it would be good or not. Although this cognitive transformation is but one aspect of acquiring *phronesis*, 'the eye of experience', as Aristotle metaphorically describes it in a passage of *EN* 6.11 (that I will quote and study on pp. 109-10 below), it is crucial that we examine it in order to settle whether Burnyeat or Lawrence's interpretation is more plausible. The transformation implies that the above cognitive development in the apprehension of good actions, which accompanies the development of *phronesis*, is not achievable only through listening to lectures on ethics, *pace* Burnyeat. Aristotle's previous metaphor, and his statement in *EN* 1.3 that 'each person judges noble the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge [...] hence of the political art, a young person is not an appropriate student, for he is inexperienced in the actions pertaining to life',²⁹¹ signal that the cognitive development in moral discernment takes place through acquiring experience in acting well, which, according to Lawrence, is all that is needed for developing *phronesis*. Although Burnyeat might handle the *EN* 1.3 passage by replying that the required experience is to be acquired before one can

²⁹⁰ See section 2.5 above for my interpretation of *synesis*.

²⁹¹ *EN* 1.3 1095a3–6. Cf. *EN* 1.3 1095a5–10, quoted in footnote 146 on p. 58 above.

even begin to develop *phronesis*,²⁹² such a reply would be incoherent, for it would imply that there would not be any cognitive development in a finely-habituated *synetos*' apprehension of good actions during the time in which he is becoming *phronimos*, though we have seen in the above quotations that Aristotle thinks that there is such development.

On the whole, Lawrence's interpretation about the contribution of teaching and experience to acquiring *phronesis* seems therefore more plausible than Burnyeat's. Let us thus proceed to evaluate it further. The only immediately obvious problem in it is that there is no textual evidence for the conclusion that *phronesis* is *only* the ability to identify good actions, whereas there is, as I have argued in detail in section 2.5 above, a plenty of such evidence in *EN* 6.10 for drawing the same conclusion about *synesis*. However, if we only replace Lawrence's conclusion that *phronesis* is the ability to identify good actions with the more justifiable conclusion that *synesis* identifies good actions—and that the 'full and architectonic' *phronesis* is thus the one and only *phronesis*—his interpretation could survive this problem. After this conceptual modification, Lawrence's interpretation would suggest that *phronesis*, the knowledge of why good actions are good, results from experience in using *synesis*.

But Lawrence's interpretation also suffers from a problem, which only conceptual modifications cannot remedy. If only a person who understands why good actions are good can teach ethics to other people, yet if one does not need to be taught ethics, but only have moral experience in order to acquire that understanding, we may wonder to whom he should teach ethics and why? Aristotle suggests in *EN* 1.4 that finely-habituated people are the proper audience for his teaching, but provided that they can improve their character without attending to ethics lectures, they might have only epistemic reasons—to acquire moral knowledge for its own sake—to attend them. This is possible: on the first lines of *Met* 1.1, Aristotle states that we desire to know by nature, and a similar approach seems to characterise even the contemporary teaching of moral philosophy. However, this conclusion would hardly fit with the

²⁹² See Burnyeat 1980, p. 81–82 for this reading of the passage, according to which teaching *phronesis* will only be effective with a student who is already morally experienced, as only 'he is ready to form his desires in the light of reasoning.' (p. 82)

status of ethics as a practical science, or Aristotle's claim in *EN* 2.2 that we study ethics to become good, not to know what is good.²⁹³ Therefore it would be desirable in an interpretation of his views on the contribution of experience and teaching to the development of *phronesis* to allow ethics teaching to have moral benefits as well.

I would thus like to propose an alternative interpretation, which assumes that teaching and experience are *equally* necessary for developing *phronesis*. According to this suggestion, one becomes *phronimos* not by deducing why certain actions are good on one's own, on the basis of one's experiences, *pace* Lawrence. Rather, one could let teaching help one 'to pick out' reasons for the goodness of certain actions from experience, which, in turn, would help him to see that understanding those reasons also improves his acting (in Chapter 4 we will see how acquiring *phronesis* could improve even a finely habituated *synetos*' acting), motivating him to seek more teaching to grasp those right reasons for action even better. At the end of this development, one instinctively acts from the right reason, and hence, has *phronesis*.

3.3.1 The Roles of Teaching and Experience

My proposal above may seem, however, to be in need of more specification. If Aristotle thought that a finely habituated *synetos* takes the step to *phronesis* through teaching and experience, it would be disappointing if he nowhere said what makes each aspect developmentally distinct: what is the difference between teaching, or listening to lectures in ethics, and experience in acting well? The two might seem to often overlap, at least conceptually. For example, is not receiving ethics teaching describable also as an experience, or is acquiring experience in listening lectures quite the same as being taught ethics, *etc.*? Therefore it would be important for Aristotle to delineate this difference if he thought that developing *phronesis* from *synesis* and fine habits was neither primarily reducible to an outcome of teaching—as Burnyeat has suggested—or to the many years of acting well—as Lawrence thinks.

I think, however, that Aristotle has materials for constructing an account of the developmental role of teaching and experience in the last step of moral development

²⁹³ *EN* 2.2 1103b28–9. Quoted on p. 6 above.

from *synesis* and fine habits to *phronesis*. Although Aristotle never tells us what attending to lectures in ethics can teach a finely-habituated person in distinction from what he can learn from his own experience of acting well, it suffices for us to study what Aristotle says about the distinct role of experience in developing *phronesis* to get to also know the role of teaching—for since Aristotle ever mentions only these two sources and catalysts for this development, any element of *phronesis* that could not come from experience, must hence come from teaching. In *EN* 6.11, he writes:

(A) Though no one is held to be wise (*sophos*) by nature, a person is held to have discernment, (*krisis*), *synesis*, and thought (*nous*) by nature. A sign of this is that we suppose these accompany the times of life, and a given time of life is possessed by thinking and discernment, for nature is the cause of them. (B) Hence thinking is both beginning (*arche*) and end (*telos*), for demonstrations (*apodexeis*) arise from these [i.e. *krisis*, *synesis*, *nous*] and concern them. (C) As a result (*hoste*), one ought to pay attention to undemonstrated assertions and opinions of the experienced and older people, or of the *phronimoi*, no less than to demonstrations, for they have an eye of experience, they see correctly.²⁹⁴

In section A, Aristotle says that although wisdom (*sophia*) does not come by nature (*physein*), discernment (*krisis*), *synesis*, and thinking (*nous*) are capabilities that come with age. He seems thus to contrast chosen and necessary moral development, the latter of which a normal human being develops at certain age even without taking the conscious effort to develop them.²⁹⁵ Section (B) is very terse and thus, it is also controversial for interpreters. The kind of interpretation that an interpreter is inclined to adopt seems to depend, however, on whether or not he or she favours the Grand End interpretation discussed in Chapter 1.²⁹⁶ For a supporter of that interpretation, thinking (*nous*) being the ‘beginning’ (*arche*) of moral demonstrations would mean that it intuitively presents an agent a blueprint picture of *eudaimonia*, the truthfulness of which the agent tries to show dialectically through demonstration, which thus renders *nous* also the ‘end’ (*telos*) of the demonstration. However, the Grand End

²⁹⁴ *EN* 6.11 1143b6–14.

²⁹⁵ Aristotle contrasts moral habituation that does not take place inevitably, but which has to be chosen (according to *EN* 3.5) and events that take place ‘by nature’, that is, take place inevitably under certain conditions (e.g. a stone falls by nature if dropped), in *EN* 2.1 1103a14–16, quoted on p. 54 above. Cf. Kraut 2007, p. 204, fn. 4: ‘according to Aristotle, a tendency can be properly called natural [...] if it is not a product of reasoning or any other conscious effort to summon it into existence.’

²⁹⁶ See section 1.4 above.

interpretation has already shown to be not the most plausible overall interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral cognition: for example it cannot plausibly accommodate the philosopher's statement in an immediately preceding passage, quoted on pp. 35-6 above—that 'universals arise from particulars.' Hence we might seek some other reading. Perhaps Aristotle wants to remind that thinking is the 'beginning' of moral demonstrations, because *synesis*, our discerning ability to identify good actions, is an intellectual (*dianoetikon*) ability, and their 'end', because *phronesis*, understanding why they are good, is a virtue of thought. At least in this sense, moral demonstrations could be correctly said to both start and conclude with the involvement of thought.

We may take Aristotle to indicate in section C that the experience of thinking, using discernment (*krisis*), and *synesis*, the abilities mentioned in section A, in both acting well and moral demonstrations, contributes to the development of *phronesis*. For it is hard to see what else apart from the previous discussion could be the reference of his phrase 'as a result... (*hoste*).' One may now wonder why Aristotle separates, in section (A), discernment from *synesis*, which, as we have learned, means moral discernment, the ability to identify good actions. However, the reason for this is likely that one needs also epistemic discernment, of truth, valid arguments, etc. to successfully learn *phronesis*, because learning it involves not only acting well many times, but also listening the lectures in ethics.²⁹⁷ As section (A) lets us know, no one becomes wise (*sophos*) by nature, without chosen effort: that is, only using one's natural cognitive abilities for the sake of becoming wise for many years can make one *phronimos*.²⁹⁸ According to section (C), we can therefore rely on the moral opinions of older and more experienced people than us, even without asking for demonstrations, 'for they have an eye of experience, they see correctly'.

It would be a sign of interpretative confusion to think that this statement of Aristotle's could imply that a fully morally virtuous person does not need to even

²⁹⁷ This small consideration, although speculative, could further undermine already undermined Lawrence's (2011) interpretation, according to which only experience of good actions suffices to develop *phronesis*. For in that case, Aristotle would not have had to distinguish *synesis* from *krisis* among the factors that contribute to the development of *phronesis*.

²⁹⁸ In the context of the passage, *sophia* presumably refers to practical rather than theoretical wisdom.

have any capability to construct moral demonstrations, because they have an ability to intuitively ‘see’ good actions thanks to their experience. Although virtuous people may of course not need competence for scientific demonstrations aiming at proving universal truths—as a species of which the Grant End interpretation regards also moral demonstrations, demonstrations aimed at proving that *eudaimonia* can be captured into certain universal blueprint—they need, however, to be able to make moral demonstrations, which are about particulars: to identify good actions and understand why they are good—that is, have *synesis* and *phronesis*. We established this conclusion already in Chapter 2. Provided that *synesis*, which belongs to most people, can already ‘see’ good actions with the help of people’s opinions, seeing the good actions is, as a matter of fact, not even specific to ‘the older and experienced.’

Aristotle’s metaphor about the eye of experience could be more coherently interpreted to mean that apart from correctly discerning which actions are good, the experienced people can also correctly ‘see’ the demands of situations, which can then be used in demonstrating why just those actions are good in each situation. *This* understanding is specific only to the experienced *phronimoi*. Understanding why an action identified as good by *synesis* is good—not only insofar as it is good according to other people’s opinions, but also because it meets the demands of a situation—can only come from many years of experience of acting across different situations. Aristotle might have chosen to use the metaphor of the eye of experience because the *phronimos*’ experience-based understanding why good actions are good evades any satisfactory conceptual description. If *situations* are made of space, time, sounds, feelings, and many other things that cannot be translated into the propositional form required by a conceptual description, how could their demands be translated as such?

Moreover, *even if* we could somehow conceive of the demands of situations through propositional structures—as McDowell has argued²⁹⁹—an *explanation* of why it is good to perform a certain action could hardly be entirely propositional. For the knowledge of the relations between moral propositions is not knowledge of a proposition—otherwise our moral explanations would constitute either an infinite

²⁹⁹ McDowell 1994 is the most famous contemporary version of this ‘conceptualist’ thesis.

regress or web, neither of which Aristotle's moral epistemology permits. According to him, *phronesis* is 'a correct conception (*hypolepsis*) of the end (*to telos*)',³⁰⁰ which is the last answer to the question why good actions are good: because meeting the demands of situations (*eupraxia*) is equivocal to *eudaimonia*.³⁰¹ It is the end of all our desires, of whose content we neither know by nature nor, as we have seen, can satisfactorily describe in language.³⁰² The content of *eudaimonia* has to be learnt by experiencing the demands of situations. Therefore presumably the method of articulating this knowledge in language must be taught: although no one could learn to discern the moral demands of situations without extensive moral experience, even morally inexperienced or badly-habituated people could characterise some of those demands. As Aristotle states in *EN* 7.3, they could register, e.g., that eating sweets is bad for them in this situation, or that light meats are healthy for people in their condition, *etc.* However, without 'the eye of experience', they could not understand that acting well realises *eudaimonia*, and apply this knowledge to their actions: Aristotle admits that people can recite correct moral demonstrations without having confidence in them.³⁰³ I hope to show in Chapter 4 that it is perhaps a lack of confidence deriving from a lack of experience that produces *akrasia*. This might be why he emphasises that only finely-habituated people can profit from his lectures.³⁰⁴

Although Aristotle does not say much explicitly about the didactic content of his lectures,³⁰⁵ his separating the developmental contribution of experience and teaching substantiates his view that a finely-habituated person needs both experience and teaching to develop *phronesis*. Experience provides one with understanding of the moral demands of situations; the ability to see that doing as *synesis* advises is *eudaimonia* independently of anyone's opinion. Teaching enables one, however, to

³⁰⁰ *EN* 6.9 1142b33–6,

³⁰¹ Aristotle equates *eudaimonia* with acting well (*eupraxia*) and living well (*eu' zen*) in *EN* 1.4 1095a19–20 and in *MM* 1.4 1184a26.

³⁰² The aim (*telos*) of every action is *eudaimonia* (*EN* 1.1 1094a1), but people disagree about what *eudaimonia* is (*EN* 1.4 1095a20–30).

³⁰³ *EN* 7.3 1147a19–23.

³⁰⁴ *EN* 1.4 1095b4–7.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Kristjánsson (2007), p. 42: 'perhaps Aristotle did not consider himself such an expert on moral didactic to write a manual on it', or that, since a 'large portion of Aristotle's writings on education have undoubtedly been lost', maybe his writings on delineating the difference also.

conceive those demands as justifications for the identifications of *synesis*—that is, to articulate them in language—i.e., that this action is good, because of *x* and *y*, etc. For a *synetos*, who has neither extensive moral experience nor education, and who hence identifies good actions mostly on the basis of other people’s opinions, coming to conceive that the actions that other people’s opinions support are good, because they also realise *eudaimonia*, no doubt strengthens his motivation to act well. The more moral teaching a person receives, the better he conceives this connection, and the more experience he has, the better he understands why good actions are good.

Aristotle's account of taking the developmental step from fine habits to moral understanding can therefore be as thorough, though less explicit, as his description of the steps from our natural state to acquiring fine habits—i.e. developing a desire to act virtuously, *synesis*, and the habit of not desiring bad pleasures. However, a question remains about *how* the virtue of thought *phronesis* can make a finely-habituated person morally virtuous. We know only that Aristotle is convinced that this is the case. We have studied how *phronesis* can be developed, and we know that a *phronimos* understands why good actions are good, is likely to have a strong motivation to act well, and can teach virtue to others. We have not yet studied, however, what moral, or action-related benefits Aristotle thinks developing *phronesis* should bring that mere habituation cannot, and how *phronesis* might help in making one invulnerable to *akrasia*, as I suggested. I shall focus on these topics in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

AVOIDING AKRATIC ACTING

Phronimos is a person who has the virtue of *phronesis*, who understands that acting well is *eudaimonia*.³⁰⁶ Although Aristotle's theory of moral development does not explicitly feature a further type of imperfect, non-*phronimoi* character apart from the vicious, akratic, and enkratic—who all fall short of being finely habituated—it does have space for a finely-habituated person who is not *phronimos*. For example, he says in *EN* 1.4 that in order to listen to lectures on ethics, which should help them to acquire *phronesis*, people must already be finely habituated.³⁰⁷ Likewise, he claims in *Pol.* 3.4 that a good citizen is not synonymous with a virtuous person: although both have fine habits, only the latter has *phronesis*.³⁰⁸ Since *phronesis* is a virtue of thought, a finely-habituated person has at least *an epistemic reason*, a reason related to increasing his knowledge, to acquire it: to come to understand that acting well is *eudaimonia*. Let me show now that Aristotle also thinks that such a person also has a reason related to improving his own acting—a *moral reason*—to become *phronimos*.

As we learned from *EN* 6.13, Aristotle's concept of 'proper virtue' signifies moral virtue that involves *phronesis*, and in *EE* 8.1 he states in the same vein that 'it is clear that [when] people become *phronimoi*, the states of [their] non-rational aspect become simultaneously good'.³⁰⁹ In Chapter 1 of my thesis, we discovered that these claims derive from his conviction that only acting well with *phronesis* is *meta tou orthou logou*—acting well, because acting well is *eudaimonia*.³¹⁰ Aristotle regards

³⁰⁶ Aristotle equates *eudaimonia* with acting well (*eupraxia*) in *EN* 1.4 1095a19–20. The aim (*telos*) of every action is *eudaimonia* (*EN* 1.1 1094a1) but in order to realise *eudaimonia*, one has to understand that *eupraxia* is *eudaimonia*. Aristotle indicates in *EN* 6.9 1142b33–6 that *phronesis* is this understanding.

³⁰⁷ *EN* 1.4 1095b4–7. See *EN* 2.1 1103a14–16, quoted on p. 54 above, for Aristotle's claim that developing a virtue of thought (such as *phronesis*) requires attending to teaching.

³⁰⁸ *Pol.* 3.4 1277b25–30.

³⁰⁹ *EE* 8.11246b32–6.

³¹⁰ See p. 22 above and *EN* 6.5 1140b5–6: '*Phronesis* is a capacity to act with the right reason (*alethei meta logou*) with regard to things that are good or bad for a man. For while making has an end other than itself, acting well (*eupraxia*) cannot, for it is the end (*telos*) (i.e. because *eupraxia* = *eudaimonia*)'. Elsewhere (e.g. *EN* 6.13 1144b27–8) he uses synonymous term *orthos logos* while

especially this mode of acting as noble (*kalon*).³¹¹ Anyone who does not have *phronesis*, who does not understand this, *orthos logos* in his present situation, can only act in accordance with (*kata*) it, which, though a recommendable mode of acting on its own, is not yet noble. Moreover, a *phronimos* never acts out of his character, but all other people, even the finely habituated people who do not yet have *phronesis*, can act badly on occasion.³¹² Hence there must be a moral reason for a finely habituated person to acquire *phronesis*: becoming able to act *meta tou orthou logou*.

We have not studied what moral implications taking this developmental step has for a finely-habituated person according to Aristotle. In this chapter, I attempt to find out the most important of those implications. I assume that the philosopher considers acting *meta tou orthou logou* especially noble, because anyone who does not understand that acting well is *eudaimonia*—the only moral motivation that can possibly preclude any competing motivations, for the natural aim of our every action is to realise *eudaimonia*³¹³—may act from bad motivation. This assumption, that *a cognitive defect allows bad motivation to cause akratic acting*, is the guiding hypothesis of my interpretation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* in *EN 7.3*, which I attempt to establish in part 1 of this chapter. Any person who can identify a good action with *synesis*, but who does not have *phronesis* such that understanding that performing that action would be *eudaimonia*, I argue, is vulnerable to acting akratically. For the most part, the risk of him acting akratically is relative to his moral habituation: a finely-habituated person is less vulnerable to acting akratically than an enkratic, who, in turn, is far less vulnerable than an akratic. My conclusion, however, will be that only a properly virtuous person is invulnerable to akratic acting, because only he has *phronesis* in addition to a finely-habituated character.

This conclusion, according to which the moral reason for finely-habituated people to acquire *phronesis* is to eliminate their vulnerability to akratic acting, may seem

describing acting in accordance with this right reason, that good actions are performed because performing them is acting well (= *eudaimonia*).

³¹¹ See footnote 44 on p. 22 above for references.

³¹² In *EN 9.4* 1166a26-29, Aristotle claims that *phronimos* never has to regret anything, for his inclinations are so harmonious that the same things are always bad or pleasant to him, which implies he never does anything bad. However, in *Pol. 7.13* 1332b6-7, Aristotle states that 'people' – thus referring to all the people who are not *phronimoi* – 'do many things contrary their habit or nature.'

³¹³ See footnote 44 on p. 22 above for references.

implausible. It goes against the scholarly consensus view that already enkratic people never act akratically, which is the psychological feature that differentiates them from the akratic, and, moreover, this also seems to remove also any non-arbitrary difference between enkratic and finely-habituated people, thus contradicting itself. For have I not just claimed that akratic, enkratic, and finely-habituated people can all have bad motivations and are all vulnerable to akratic acting, thus making these types arbitrarily separated degrees of one type of character, not different types?

In order to counter this negative impression, I argue that the non-arbitrary difference between the akratic and enkratic character-type in Aristotle could lie in the fact that an akratic person's bad desires are *characteristically* stronger than his good desires, whereas for an enkratic, good desires prevail. Appealing to the psychological features that one's behaviour displays most of the time could be a non-arbitrary basis upon which Aristotle could classify an akratic as a bad type of character and an enkratic a good type.³¹⁴ I attempt to show further, in the last half of this chapter, that the difference between an enkratic and a finely-habituated person might be that the latter, since his moral habituation is completed, does not even desire inappropriate pleasures, unlike the former—whose moral habituation is still in progress.

A desire for pleasure is not, however, the only motivation that can motivate one to akratic actions: in *EN* 7.6, Aristotle points out that at least anger (*thumos*) can also lead people to act akratically. Since anger has no connection with pleasure, the habituation of character required to resist inappropriate pleasure might not help to control it. I will therefore argue—on the basis of studying *EN* 7.6—that even finely-habituated people are vulnerable to acting akratically (excessively violently) while being angry, and this is what differentiates them from the virtuous people. I will suggest that only developing *phronesis*—which implies excellence in deliberation and motivation to act well on account of understanding that acting well is *eudaimonia*—might prevent akratic acting from anger. Becoming able to rein in

³¹⁴ Aristotle makes this classification first time in *EN* 7.1 1145a15–17, and calls enkrates frequently as good (*spoudaios*) and akratic as bad (*phaulos*) elsewhere. In *Pol.* 7.13 1332b6–7, he says, moreover, that most people do many things contrary to their habits and nature, which implies that akratic and enkratic could people also act in a way that is not typical to their character at times.

one's anger in any situation, I will conclude, would be an excellent moral reason for finely-habituated people to take the step to *phronesis* and full moral virtue.

4.1 THE COGNITIVE DEFECT IN *AKRASIA* ACCORDING TO BROADIE

The interpretation that I have delineated above begins from the hypothesis that an akratically-acting person suffers from a cognitive defect—presumably from a lack of *phronesis*³¹⁵—that enables a bad non-rational motivation to take him over. This is what Aristotle explicitly argues in the beginning of *EN* 7.2. Since Aristotle's latter arguments, however, are less explicit, there is a room for disagreement about what motivational safeguards the akratically acting agent lacks by not having *phronesis*. According to my interpretation, he may only lack understanding that performing a good action is *eudaimonia*. Since everyone desires *eudaimonia* more than *any other* end of rational or non-rational desires (people only ever disagree about what *eudaimonia* is), no one could voluntarily act in a way that he understands to prevent *eudaimonia*—i.e. act badly—provided that he understands what *eudaimonia* is. However, according Sarah Broadie, whose influential book *Ethics with Aristotle* contains probably the most comprehensive particularist interpretation of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* so far—an interpretation that departs from the assumption studied in the end of chapter 1, that the process of moral deliberation involves universals such as the conception of *eudaimonia*—an akratically-acting person's lack of *phronesis* implies that, under strong non-rational desire, he momentarily ignores his knowledge of what would be a good action, and as a result performs bad action.

I have already concluded, in Chapter 3, that it is plausible to think that the rational ability of *synesis* identifies good actions, and to consider *phronesis* the virtue of thought that safeguards one's motivation to act well: the understanding that acting well realises *eudaimonia*. Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia* in *EN* 7.3 is the final test

³¹⁵ Aristotle claims that an akratic does not have *phronesis* in *EN* 7.2 1146a7–9 and 7.10 1152a6–8 and in *EN* 6.12 1144b2, that the akratic can have cleverness (*deinotes*). Since *deinotes* is incompatible with *phronesis*, also this Aristotle's view implies that the akratic does not have *phronesis*.

for my interpretation. Should it lend more support to the conclusion that an akratic agent might not be ignorant of the good action while acting badly, but only fail to understand that performing it realises *eudaimonia*, apart from having had insufficient moral habituation, then we have a reason to prefer my interpretation to Broadie's.

Let me therefore begin to specify Aristotle's views on *akrasia*. The starting point that all interpreters, including Broadie, endorse is that Aristotle's theory of desire has no problem accommodating the *possibility* of akratic acting: his conception that the desire for pleasure is entirely non-rational enables him to argue that it can drive one to act against one's rational decision to perform a good action (provided that one does not understand that performing it would be *eudaimonia*). Thus we may expect Aristotle not to attempt to explain in *EN* 7.3 how akratic acting is possible. However, that akratic acting is possible according to Aristotle's theory of desire is precisely what poses him a philosophical challenge. He is after all committed to preserve the views of his authoritative predecessors (*endoxa*) as far as possible,³¹⁶ and probably his most authoritative predecessor, Socrates, thought that there is no such thing as akratic acting, since all bad actions result from ignorance.³¹⁷ Therefore, Aristotle, so as to save the basic thesis of Socrates' view while not abandoning his own theory of desire, needs to show there is some cognitive mistake, describable as ignorance,

³¹⁶ See *EN* 7.1 1145b2-7 (R): 'We must [...] set the phenomena (*phainomena*) before us and, after first discussing the difficulties, go on to prove, if possible, the truthfulness of all the authoritative opinions (*endoxa*) about these, or, failing this, of the greater number and the most authoritative of them; for if we both refute the objections and leave the opinions undisturbed, we shall have proved the case sufficiently.' There has been scholarly disagreement about the relation between appearances and *endoxa* in Aristotle's passage. According to Nussbaum (1986), both appearances and *endoxa* are opinions, because she thinks that both involve judgements, whereas according to G. E. L. Owen (1986) and Jonathan Barnes (1980), appearances are 'bare' observations and *endoxa* authoritative people's (such as Socrates') opinions about them. These both views seem to be, however, too extreme. For some appearances are no doubt opinions and involve judgements - such as the appearance that there are akratic actions. This does, however, not have to mean that all appearances are judgements, because, as we concluded in Ch. 1, Aristotle does not think that one needs to make any judgements in order to perceive something as e.g. pleasant (or of certain colour *etc.*). For an interpretation of this kind, see e.g. McLeod 1995 (that criticises Nussbaum, Owen and Barnes), pp. 4-6, or Berti 2008a, pp. 26-7.

³¹⁷ *Prot.* 358C: 'No one who either knows or believes that something else, which is in his power to do, is better than what he is doing, subsequently does the other, when he can do what is better' and *D* 'Now, no one goes voluntarily toward the bad or what he believes to be the bad' See also *Clit.* 407D, in which Socrates is reported as saying, 'injustice is involuntary'.

involved in every bad action, but that this mistake does not prevent some of those actions from being genuinely akratic: ‘against what [the agent] discerns the best’.³¹⁸

Aristotle makes this challenge explicit in *EN 7.2*:

Now we may ask how a man who discerns (*kritein*) correctly (*orthon*) can behave akratically. That he should behave so when he has knowledge, some say is impossible; for it would be strange—so Socrates thought—if when knowledge was in a man something else could master it and drag it about like a slave. For Socrates was entirely opposed to the view in question, holding that there is no such thing as *akrasia*; no one, he argued, when he discerns acts against what he discerns the best—people act so only from ignorance. Now this view plainly contradicts the appearances, and we must inquire about what happens to such a man: provided that his acting involves ignorance, what is the manner (*propós*) of his ignorance?³¹⁹

Aristotle’s answer to the question with which he ends this passage is, however, far from explicit. One task that he poses himself in the following chapter, *EN 7.3*, is to answer it and thereby show the compatibility of his theory of desire with Socrates’ thought—to set the boundary between ‘mere ignorance’ and *akrasia*. I attempt to show next that in *EN 7.2* and 3 Aristotle aims to explain how the akratically-acting person’s lack of *phronesis* does not count as mere ignorance. He is not ignorant insofar as he can identify the good action and find reasons for performing it; he is ignorant only insofar as he does not understand that acting well is *eudaimonia*. Broadie, however, has quite the opposite interpretation: since, according to her, *phronesis* ‘is to do with particulars’, the understanding that acting well is *eudaimonia* is *exclusively* theoretical knowledge on his view.³²⁰ Hence she thinks that whether one understands that acting well is *eudaimonia* or not does not affect one’s moral motivation, and the akratically-acting person’s lack of *phronesis* is therefore

³¹⁸ Cf. Bostock 2000 *ad loc*: ‘One might remark here that both in these initial skirmishes, and in his subsequent treatment of the issue, Aristotle is accepting that ‘ignorance’ is somehow involved; he does not seem to contemplate the possibility that Socrates has got it entirely wrong. And this despite the fact that he has not actually given us any argument at all in favor of Socrates’ position.’ This is also what both Broadie and Charles assume. I think, however, that Aristotle does not consider an akratic ignorant only out of respect to Socrates, but also his own view that *phronimos* never acts badly (see *EN 9.4* 1166a10-29) precludes him from attributing the moral understanding of a *phronimos* to the akratic.

³¹⁹ *EN 7.2*. 1145b21–31.

³²⁰ See Broadie 1991, p. 242. Broadie appeals to *EN 6.11* 1143a28–b5, in which Aristotle says ‘with regard to action, [*nous*—Aristotle does not explicitly refer to *phronesis*] is concerned with last and possibly changing things’, to justify this point (cf. pp. 35-6 above, in which I interpret this passage somewhat differently). She does not, however, explain how her interpretation relates to *EN 6.8* 1142a14–15, in which Aristotle states that *phronesis* is ‘concerned not only with universals’.

displayed only in him ignoring the moral demands of his situation—that he is not ‘merely ignorant’, but ignorant of the moral demands of his present situation in particular.³²¹ *Akrasia* is thus not ‘mere ignorance,’ but a certain variety of ignorance.

Let us begin to assess the principal merits of my and Broadie’s interpretations. Perhaps the most obvious consideration for accepting my interpretation of Aristotle’s reply to his own challenge is that if the akratically acting person were *in any sense* ignorant of what his situation required him to do, then it can be doubted if he even acts akratically. Provided that Aristotle accepts Socrates’ definition of akratic acting as one’s acting knowingly ‘that something else, which is in his power to do, is better than what he is doing’,³²² then Broadie’s ‘akratically acting person’ might not be a specifically akratic for Aristotle, but only a type of ignorant person. However, if the akratically-acting person identifies the good action, is aware of it while acting, but nevertheless fails to perform it, as I suggest, then he would clearly act akratically.

Broadie has contested this consideration, however. According to her, Aristotle, unlike Socrates, does not even clearly differentiate *akrasia* from ignorance, but draws their mutual boundary *only* by considering *akrasia* a certain variety of ignorance. Since, claims Broadie, ‘Aristotle equates the activity of using knowledge with knowledge in the strict and primary sense of the term’,³²³ just as Socrates before him, he could *not* admit that one can fail to use moral knowledge without ignoring it.³²⁴ Since this conception of *akrasia* would count as ignorance on Socrates’ view, ignorance as a failure to use moral knowledge, Aristotle can consider akratic acting possible while accepting the impossibility of *akrasia* without any ignorance.

³²¹ Broadie 1991, p. 292.

³²² See the entire quotation of *Prot.* 358C in footnote 317 above.

³²³ Broadie 199, p. 291: ‘Since knowledge possessed is essentially knowledge-for-use [...], a proper account of what it is to have knowledge makes reference to something beyond, which is the use. Since the use is also the final actuality of what is possessed, it is virtually inevitable, for reasons of logic and metaphysics, that Aristotle will equate the activity of using knowledge with knowledge in the strict and primary sense of the term’.

³²⁴ See Broadie 1991 p. 280: ‘The modern problematic of incontinence starts from the assumption that the incontinent agent is subject to conflicting desires [...] The problem which Aristotle mainly addresses is quite different: it is that describing someone as incontinent seems to entail contradictory ascriptions of knowledge and ignorance’. Therefore, (p. 288–9): ‘for [Aristotle], it is wholly natural to speak and think of incontinent behaviour as ignorance. This would be why Aristotle never questions Socrates’ claim that the incontinent acts in ignorance (Socrates claims in *Prot.* 358C, see footnote 249 above, that *akrasia* is impossible) but seeks only to rebut the Socratic implication that knowledge is wholly lacking’.

Indeed, in the beginning of *EN* 7.3, quoted below, Aristotle seems to describe an akratic as a person who fails to know what he should know in order to act well:

Since there are two kinds of premises, nothing prevents someone who holds both from acting contrary to his knowledge, because he makes only use of the universal premise, but not the particular one, the matters of action being of course particulars. There is also a relevant difference pertaining to the universal premise relating to the person himself and to the matter of concern at hand. For example, that dry foods are advantageous to every man and that he himself is a man, or, that this kind of a thing here is dry. As to whether some particular thing (e.g. food) here is of particular character (e.g. dry), however, the akratic person either does not have or ignores it. And so, given two different ways of knowing, a great difference will arise, such as that for an akratic to know in the one way (i.e. to know the universal, but either not to have or ignore the particular), seems nothing strange, but in the other way (i.e. to know the universal and particular) it would indeed be strange (*thaumastós*).³²⁵

In this passage, Aristotle assumes that the pieces of our moral knowledge can be conceived in terms of universal and particular premises (*protaseis*).³²⁶ As we saw in Chapter 3, the former kinds of premises are about the good *in general* ('dry foods are advantageous to *every man*'), whereas the latter are about good actions ('*this* food is advantageous') that a *particular* situation demands. Since Aristotle's syllogistic division is not between theoretical and particular knowledge—because even 'universal premises' are not necessarily true in any situation like theoretical knowledge (e.g. if one suffers from dehydration, dry food would probably not be advantageous for him), and thus count as particular knowledge—this may seem to lend support to Broadie, for whom all moral knowledge is particular.³²⁷ Moreover, Aristotle seems to be concluding here that akratic acting has to involve certain ignorance of the particular premises—because the akratically-acting person does not have the *phronesis* that would make his sensitive to them, Broadie might add. The possibility that Aristotle raises, that sometimes the akratically-acting person may not even have attentively learned what a good action is, seems to also strongly assimilate that person's epistemic condition with certain ignorance of the demands of his situation. To think otherwise, says Aristotle, would 'indeed be strange' (*thaumastós*),

³²⁵ *EN* 7.3 1147a1–9.

³²⁶ Perhaps in the same sense as he divides the soul in *EN* 1.13.

³²⁷ See Broadie 1991, p. 242, and footnote 320 on p. 120 above.

a phrase which must thus mean that it would be impossible.³²⁸ Aristotle's text may therefore seem to provide evidence for Broadie's interpretation, according to which the akratically-acting person's lack of *phronesis*, makes him prone to ignoring the particular moral demands of a situation when under the influence of bad desire.

4.2 CHARLES' ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

If we continue reading, however, beyond the beginning of *EN* 7.3, this impression about the correctness of Broadie's interpretation may begin to change. Even if Aristotle states that acting akratically while not ignoring the demands of the situation in any sense would be 'strange', his statement, as for example Filip Grgic has remarked, 'does not have to mean impossible, but signals the need for explanation'.³²⁹ Therefore, Aristotle does not have to be read as confirming, *pace* Broadie, that the relationship between akratic acting and acting from ignorance is that the former is only a variety of the latter: the ignorance of particulars. Anthony Kenny has even once suggested that acting from such ignorance, as described in the passage, might not be genuine *akrasia*; perhaps Aristotle is simply explaining 'one sense, in which people are said to act akratically' without acting akratically in the proper sense, that is, performing a bad action while knowing the moral demands of his situation.³³⁰ Apart from Kenny, also David Charles has claimed that in the first passage of *EN* 7.3 Aristotle does not describe akratic acting in a proper sense, but only varieties of ignorance that are colloquially called akratic. For Charles, only the 'strange' akratic acting—which Broadie's interpretation regards as impossible for

³²⁸ See Broadie 1991, p. 281: '[...] to Aristotle it seems *impossible* (italics mine) that a person should voluntarily do what conflicts with an earlier resolve while remaining aware of that resolve'. Cf. McDowell 2007, p. 61: '[Aristotle] *does not acknowledge* cases where thinking is in a good order, but there is a failure in executive excellence between the thinking and the action that it endorses'. Cf. p. 73, on which McDowell concludes, on the grounds of his interpretation of practical wisdom as an ability to identify good actions (see section 3.1 above for this) that 'incontinence is possible *only* (italics mine) on the basis of the flawed approximation of the view of a situation that practical wisdom would achieve'—i.e. on the basis of ignorance of, or inattention to, the moral demands of the situation.

³²⁹ Grgic 2002, p. 343.

³³⁰ See Kenny 1966, p. 173.

Aristotle to accept—sets the defining boundary between *akrasia* and ignorance by differentiating it from both the ignorance of particulars and of universals.³³¹

I think that we have reason to favour this interpretation, because, as I attempt to show, from the passage quoted below onwards, Aristotle seems to focus on ‘strange’ akratic acting, and the rest of his discussion in *EN 7.3* is dedicated to this:

Further, another way of having knowledge, *different from those just mentioned*, is available to men. For in the case of having, but not using knowledge, we see that having is different, such as that person both has it in a way and does not have it—for example, someone who is asleep mad or drunk. But surely those in the grip of passion are disposed in this way; for the outbursts of anger, sexual desires, and certain other such things clearly bring about a change in body too, and in some people they even cause madness. It is clear, then, that akratic must be said to be in a state similar to those people.³³²

While discussing above passage, Broadie seems to implicitly excise the sentence in italics, for he assumes that the passage *continues* to describe *akrasia* as a type of ignorance—or, ‘having (learned) but not using knowledge (of a particular good action)’, as Aristotle puts it—instead of ‘strange’ akratic acting, that is, acting badly while not ignoring the knowledge of the good action.³³³ Broadie needs to take this manoeuvre because Aristotle’s sentence tells us that the akratic acting he will now discuss is ‘different’ from that previously mentioned, i.e. different from merely ignoring the moral demands of a situation, or, syllogistically speaking, particular premises. But Broadie thinks, as we have seen, that Aristotle equates such ignorance with a failure to use the particular premises, and thus, the possibility of akratic acting without ignoring the particular premises is impossible for the philosopher to acknowledge. However, by now clearly differentiating an akratic that only fails to use the particular premises from the one who is ignorant, Aristotle suggests that there

³³¹ Charles 2009, p. 49.

³³² *EN 7.3* 1147a10-24 (B&C).

³³³ I write, ‘implicitly excise’, since Broadie 1991 does not mention the sentence. In a footnote (no. 29, p. 296), Broadie even states: ‘Cf. Charles (1984) 117–32, for the view that *NE VII.3* recognises two types of incontinent, one who is, and one who is not, clear about what he should do. But it must be admitted that the *chapter offers no definite evidence for this*. [...] [Hence] the comparison at 1147 a 13–14 with drunks, sleepers and madmen must be meant to apply to all cases of incontinent behavior (cf. b 6–8) and attention is being called to two similarities: the incontinent condition is one in which the agent fails to respond appropriately even when the occasion offers; and however it comes about, its existence has a physical basis and it does not disappear without changes in the body.’ (italics mine)

are akratics who are not in epistemic state equivocal to ignorance while acting badly.

After this sentence, Aristotle, however, nevertheless describes this differently-akratic agent to have knowledge in some way, but still not to have it in a certain sense, similar to ‘the sense in which people who are asleep, mad or drunk possess [moral] knowledge.’ Charles has called this state ‘weak *akrasia*’—weak, because it may seem that in it, the agent's desire for inappropriate pleasure, which the lack of *phronesis* permits to arise, is not strong enough to cause him to ignore the particular premises.³³⁴ It can be, however, admitted for Broadie’s defence, that Aristotle’s description is rather unclear, for it does not show *how* weak *akrasia* differs from mere ignorance of the particular premises—which could also be attributed to the sleeping, the drunk, and especially to the mad—or even *that* it must. Therefore we might be tempted to excise the line in which Aristotle says that the akratic acting he attempts to explain from now on differs from the ignorance of particular premises.

However, I don’t think we should take this option, because Aristotle continues his description, and shows, by also using metaphors of a student of philosophy and an actor—who cannot certainly said to be in any sense ignorant of the particular words that they recite, while nevertheless not acting in accordance with them³³⁵—that he is now talking about weak *akrasia* instead of the ignorance of the particular premises:

But stating the arguments that proceed from knowledge is not a sign of anything, for even people in the grip of these passions recite demonstrations and verses of Empedocles, and those who are first in learning will put together arguments, but do not yet obey them. For one must grow naturally into knowledge, and that requires time. As a result, it must be supposed that the akratic speak as actors do.³³⁶

According to Charles, this passage implies that the akratic agent, just as an actor or

³³⁴ Charles 1984, pp. 118–132.

³³⁵ Cf. Charles 2009: ‘the young students constitute an interesting case: they can put together arguments, make long speeches, and may well be convinced (e.g. on the basis of authority what they have been told. They can understand and present the relevant propositions clearly and lucidly. [...] When they repeat the words of their teachers, they are like those [actors] who have learned a script without properly assessing its truth’ and Charles 2007, p. 206: ‘like the young students, the *akrates* has failed to make the arguments or good conclusion “part of herself” [as Aristotle says in 1147a22]’.

³³⁶ *EN* 7.3 1147a18–24 (R).

student, ‘can go through the entire argument against (e.g.) eating this sweet, arrive and be aware of the good conclusion’. Charles suggests, however, that the akratic might fail to obey the good conclusion ‘because he or he lacks appropriately based confidence’ in it.³³⁷ The basis for confidence is, of course, ‘attraction to doing what he concludes should be done’.³³⁸ Without strong attraction to acting well, even a person who identifies the moral demands of his situation can fail to respond to them well, because inappropriate pleasures might attract him *more* than acting well.

Charles’ interpretation offers a plausible explanation for the difference between a merely ignorant and ‘weak akratic’—a difference that Broadie does not recognise. Since, on Charles’ view, the akratic does not ignore any piece of moral knowledge that he needs to know in order to have the correct conclusion, the interpretation preserves the difference that Aristotle acknowledged between an akratic and an ignorant person in EN 7.3—unlike Broadie’s, which considers *akrasia* a variety of ignorance.³³⁹ In the light of Charles’ interpretation, the ignorance from which the akratically-acting person *has* to suffer, so that Aristotle’s account of *akrasia* would remain true to Socrates’ view, would be different from an ignorant person’s ignorance, from the lack of knowledge. The akratic’s ignorance would be displayed in his lack of confidence in following his rational desire to act well—which would fit with Aristotle’s equating using moral knowledge with having it, as Broadie also argued. For an unconfident akratic does not certainly use his moral knowledge.³⁴⁰ This way of ignoring moral knowledge would not need to entail the ignorance of situation-specific moral demands, of which the akratic suffers according to Broadie.

Charles does not venture to explain how akratic acting displays a lack of *phronesis*. His interpretation may not, however, even seem to call for such an explanation, because one would probably not need *phronesis* to avoid weak *akrasia*. A person’s vulnerability to weak *akrasia* can be entirely conditioned by his moral

³³⁷ Charles 2009, p. 51.

³³⁸ Charles 2007, p. 206.

³³⁹ According to Broadie (1991, pp. 288–9) akratic acting is a variety of ignorance, in which one “‘knows” in the sense of having knowledge’, but does not “‘know” in the sense of using it’.

³⁴⁰ Charles 2007, p. 208: ‘If practical knowledge of the good conclusion involves not merely arriving at the good conclusion but also being drawn to act on it (cf. Broadie’s similar claim in previous footnote) it can be undermined by factors which do not make the weak akrates doubt its truth (*pace* Broadie).’

habituation: the more finely-habituated one is, the less prone one is to desiring pleasure to such an extent that it could defeat one's noetic discernment of what is truly good. Apart from weak *akrasia* (and varieties of ignorance that are colloquially called *akrasia*), there is, however, another form of *akrasia*, studying which seems to show that so as to avoid any variety of *akrasia*, not only weak *akrasia*, *phronesis* is required besides a finely-habituated character. I argue in part 2 of this chapter that although a finely-habituated person might perhaps never fall into weak *akrasia*, his habituation is not yet a safeguard against all akratic acting, because he may nevertheless act akratically from anger (*thumos*)—which is a cognitive failure that only *phronesis*, whose function (*ergon*) is excellence in deliberation, can prevent.

4.3 ARISTOTLE'S 'PHYSICAL' DESCRIPTION OF AKRATIC ACTING

Before continuing to study finely-habituated people's possible vulnerability to act akratically from anger, let me attempt to demonstrate that the last chapters of *EN 7.3* also lend support to the view that one cannot act akratically if and only if one has *phronesis* even if habituation could make him invulnerable to weak *akrasia*.

Right after the last quoted passage (*EN 7.3 1147a18–24*, on p. 113 above), Aristotle gives another, even more complicated, description of *akrasia*, this time in 'physical manner' (*kai hode physikos*) in *EN 7.3 1147a24–b2*—i.e. by considering by which mechanism the akratic agent's thought and desire actually move him to act.

(A) Further, someone may also look at the cause of *akrasia* in the physical manner (*kai hode physikos*) as follows: for the universal (premise) (*tou katholou*) is an opinion (*dóxa*), the other (premise) (*hetera*) concerns particulars, over which discernment (*aisthesis*) is authoritative from the start. (B) And when one conclusion (*sumpehranthen*) arises from the universal, the soul must necessarily assert it, but in the case of doing things, the soul at once acts. (C) For example, if one is compelled to taste all that is sweet and this thing here is sweet (it being a particular), someone who is able and not prevented must at the same time necessarily also act. (D) When, then, there is the universal present in us, forbidding us to taste, and there is also the opinion that 'everything sweet is pleasant', and that 'this is sweet' (and this opinion is active), and when desire (*epithumia*) is present in us, the one opinion bids us to avoid the object, but desire leads us towards it; for it can move each of the parts. So it turns out that akratic action results somehow from reason and belief.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ *EN 7.3 1147a24–b1* (R).

Aristotle states first, in section (A), repeating his conception stated in *EN* 7.3 1147a1–9,³⁴² that akratic deliberation, just as any moral deliberation, consists of a universal premise, which is about what is good in general, and the other premise that is about what particular action would be good. Aristotle adds here, however, that an akratically-acting person's 'universal premise' that forbids him to taste the sweet is (only) an 'opinion' (*dóxa*). I have not seen interpreters paying special attention to this addition, but I believe it might turn out to be very important. For according to a passage in *EN* 3.2, opinion does not have to motivate acting, and usually it does not.

In that passage, Aristotle writes:

'[W]e choose (*prohairometha*) to avoid [good or bad] things, but we opine about what [something] is, or to whom or in what manner is it advantageous, and we really do not opinion about pursuing or avoiding them. [...] and we choose what we know most of all be good, whereas we opine about what we do not know [...] the same people do not seem to both choose and opine what is best, rather some opine what is better, yet, on account of their corruption (*kakia*), they choose what they ought not.'³⁴³

On the basis of the above quotation, we should think that a weak akratic's universal premise is quite unlike the universal premise of a morally virtuous person with regard to its power to move one to act. Although it might have an identical logical form, the weak akratic's person's universal premise could not be an implication of rational understanding why certain actions are good—a cognitive achievement that is constitutive and intrinsic to the virtue of thought *phronesis*.³⁴⁴ For in this case, the universal premise would not be a mere 'opinion' any more, but proper knowledge, and move us to confidently choose a good action instead of only consider certain

³⁴² Quoted on p. 121 above.

³⁴³ *EN* 3.2 1112b3-11 (B&C). They translate *kakia* as 'vice' in this context. I have opted for 'corruption' to avoid confusing akratic with a vicious person, who does not even have good opinions.

³⁴⁴ For justifying this claim, esp. *EN* 6.9 1142b25–36, which equates *phronesis* with excellence in deliberation, the ability to construct moral syllogisms of which all premises are true, and having the correct conception of the end of action. In *EN* 6.12 1141b21-8, Aristotle adds that *phronesis* is also *orthos logos*, i.e. performing good actions on account of their goodness (cf. *EN* 6.5 1140b5–6: '*Phronesis* is a capacity to act with the right reason with regard to things that are good or bad for a man. For while making has an end other than itself, acting well cannot, for it is the end.'

actions more advantageous than others, as Aristotle says in the above passage.³⁴⁵

After subtly clarifying that the weak akratic's universal premise *is* a mere opinion, i.e. that it does not have power to actually move the akratic to act (unlike it moves a virtuous person for whom it is knowledge), in section (A), the philosopher proceeds to make a related contrast between the kind of moral deliberation that only results an assertion, and deliberation "in the case of doing things" in section (B). Since the latter kind of moral deliberation necessarily causes one to act once concluded,³⁴⁶ and since I have concluded in 4.2 above that Aristotle thinks that the weak akratic does not need to act even according to what he recognises as the conclusion of his moral deliberation—for otherwise Aristotle would not have a need to differentiate him from the akratic agent that is ignorant of the conclusion—it follows that the weak akratic's moral deliberation must be of the former type. That is, his moral deliberation must be only assertive, begin from moral opinions and end up asserting their advantages or disadvantages in comparison with other opinions, without, however, ever resulting in a conclusion that necessarily moves him to act according to a certain opinion. Thus it seems not true to say, *pace* Broadie, that Aristotle equates 'having' and 'using' knowledge, or, as we can see now, having and using true opinion: we can now see that he distinguishes the two ways of possessing those opinions, only asserting, or having, and also using them.³⁴⁷ This picture would also fit with Aristotle's earlier metaphors about the weak akratic being like an actor on the stage, or, as we will read soon below, a drunkard reciting philosophical teachings—for all those people only assert certain conclusions without inclination to act in accordance with them.

I believe that these conclusions about Aristotle's conception of the physical aspect

³⁴⁵ If having rational understanding why certain actions are good did *not* affect our actions - Aristotle would not have needed to emphasise either in *EN* 6.13 or *EE* 8.1 that one can only become a morally virtuous person in the strict sense (*kyrios agathos*) upon acquiring *phronesis*.

³⁴⁶ Aristotle famously describes such a deliberation in *DMA* 701a13-14: '[In practical deliberation] the two premises result in a conclusion which is an action — for example, one conceives that every man ought to walk, one is a man oneself: straightway one walks...' This Aristotle's example seems to conclude that once one has the premises necessary for identifying how he should act, 'he acts [...] provided that there is nothing in the case to compel (him to act otherwise).' Aristotle makes the same point also by using building a house and making a coat as examples (*DMA* 7 701a15-16). Since the akratic agent's deliberation does not conclude in an action, it would therefore be a mistake to think that the account of *DMA* would apply also to his deliberation, although interpreters often claim so.

³⁴⁷ See p. 109 and 113 above for Broadie's conception of akratic person's ignorance.

of moral deliberation, i.e. about the force of weak akratic's premises to cause acting, in sections (A) and (B), enable us to see that a certain line of interpreting Aristotle's conception supported by contemporary commentators, might be mistaken.³⁴⁸ Were the akratic deliberation only assertive, the example of practical deliberation that Aristotle gives in section (C) above could not describe an akratically acting person's deliberation. Let me quote the example again: 'if one is compelled to taste all that is sweet and this thing here is sweet (it being a particular), someone who is able and not prevented must at the same time necessarily also act.' If this example were about an akratically-acting person's deliberation, as the supporters of that line of interpretation assume, then his akratic acting, as we will see, should be a result of two competing chains of moral deliberation clashing in his mind, and the bad chain winning his mind over in the end. Therefore the agent would neither be weak in Charles' sense, aware of what he should do but unable to execute the action due to a non-rational urge to act otherwise, nor ignorant of the good action as a result of a bad desire, as Broadie argued—but perform a bad action due to an intellectual confusion.

According to the considered line of interpretation, while the beginning of section (D) describes the good chain of deliberation, this example in section (C) describes the bad chain, according to which conclusion the akratic person ends up in acting. Provided that the akratically-acting person's moral deliberation is only assertive in the state of *akrasia*, this 'competing syllogisms' scenario cannot, however, be the case. Regardless of whether it is good or bad, a purely assertive moral deliberation could not move him to act. Thus, even if the person had a bad chain of moral deliberation in his mind apart from the good one, this chain, if only assertive, could not move him to act akratically. The example in section (C) may thus not describe akratic deliberation, but illustrate the akratically-acting person's non-rational, non-deliberated desire, which motivationally overrides his correct, and his only, chain of moral deliberation—what is expectable since this deliberation is only assertive.

Besides this consideration, also Aristotle's language in section (C) points to the correctness of my interpretation instead of the alternative 'competing syllogisms' interpretation. For no one, not even the most hardened akratic, could seriously

³⁴⁸ For recent versions of this interpretation, see Zingano 2007 and Lorenz 2009, pp.190-1.

contemplate such an implausible universal premise as ‘I ought to taste everything pleasant’ as the ground of his acting. Moreover, Aristotle says that the akratic agent would follow that premise provided that he is ‘able and not prevented.’ It is, however, hard to see why anyone would be ‘compelled’ to follow this sort of premise upon only contemplating it. Aristotle’s description about the compulsion to eat sweets is thus more probably a conceptual description of the akratically acting person’s non-rational desire (which is neither chosen nor up to deliberation) than any universal premise that he formulates in his mind. Assuming that this is the case, we could take Aristotle’s passage to show that the weak akratic acts against his rational choice driven solely by a non-rational desire, not by any competing syllogism. Since his rational choice not to eat sweets cannot move him away from eating the sweets, he simply cannot help but eating the sweets if he desires to eat them. This is how his non-rational desire could be said to compel him to eat them.

Section (D) may seem to pose, however, a potential threat to my interpretation. Aristotle may seem to state in it that the source of the weak akratic person’s desire to act badly, to eat a piece of sweet food, is in his opinion that ‘everything sweet is pleasant,’ which he connects with his other premise that ‘I ought to taste everything pleasant.’ Although this latter premise, as we have concluded above, might seem too odd for any rational person to actually contemplate as the basis of his acting, it simply must be in the akratic agent’s mind, an objector may say, so that his other premise that ‘everything sweet is pleasant,’ a belief that we might assume an akratic to have, would cause him to act badly, as it does, according to Aristotle. The philosopher even concludes that the akratic act thus ‘results somehow from reason and belief.’ Hence the ‘competing syllogisms’ interpretation, although it uncharitably entails that the akratic would contemplate implausible universal premises (i.e. apart from having bad desire to eat sweets and contemplating the correct syllogism forbidding him to taste the desired sweets), may nevertheless seem to be right.

However, as Pierre Destreé has recently remarked, even section (D) does not entail that the akratically acting person would need to have a bad chain of reasoning to override the correct one in his mind so as to act according to his bad desire. The person can desire pleasure non-rationally, without contemplating an extravagant

universal premise such as that ‘I ought to taste everything pleasant’. However, so as to generate a desire directed towards some particular piece of sweet food out of his general non-rational urge to receive pleasure, he has to have formed a belief such as ‘everything sweet is pleasant.’ This is how akratic acting can result ‘somehow from reason and belief:’ both are involved instrumentally in satisfying the bad desire.³⁴⁹

We can now see that Aristotle’s account of *akrasia* in ‘physical manner’ does not invite us to question the conclusion that we reached on the basis of his earlier description, that an akratic person does not have to be ignorant of the good action. The physical account neatly accommodates the phenomenon of weak *akrasia*: if the akratic agent’s universal premise is only an opinion, not knowledge that is present in *phronesis*, the deliberation that can be based on it must be only assertive, as it is the case with a weak akratic, not a deliberation that concludes with a decisive choice to perform a particular action, as with a person of *phronesis*. Since, according to my interpretation, the akratic person that Aristotle describes lacks an understanding of why certain actions are good, as such Aristotle’s account supports it, as opposed to Brodie’s interpretation. For according to him, as we have seen above, understanding why certain actions are good should not matter at all for one’s motivation to act.

After having subtly clarified that the akratically-acting person cannot be aware of the universal premise in the same way as the morally virtuous person, as for him it is a mere true opinion, whereas for the virtuous person who also understands why it is true, the premise is knowledge that causes him to choose a certain action—Aristotle concludes his description of akratic acting in a physical manner with the this passage:

‘Now, the last premise (*teleutaia prótasis*) both being an opinion about a perceptible object, and being what determines our actions this man either has not when he is in the state of passion, or has it in the sense in which having knowledge did not mean knowing but only talking, as a drunken man may utter the verses of Empedocles.³⁵⁰

The interpreters of *EN* 7.3 have traditionally had difficulties with this passage. It may seem that also my interpretation will have, for if the non-rational desire of the weak akratic undermines his confidence in performing the action that he has correctly

³⁴⁹ Destreé 2007, p. 152.

³⁵⁰ *EN* 7.3 1147b8-19.

identified as good (i.e. the particular premise), as also Charles proposed, why would Aristotle seem to conclude here that all the cases of *akrasia* involve the lack of knowledge about the last, that is, particular premise? However, the term *teleutaia prótasis* is ambiguous, for *prótasis* is a Greek term not only for a premise but also for a proposition. It could also refer to the akratic's last proposition, the conclusion of his moral deliberation, that is, to his discernment that a particular action is good.³⁵¹

The another option, that *teleutaia prótasis*, which an akratic fails to know, is the last premise, e.g. 'this food in front of me is sweet'—and thus, the akratic must be ignorant moral demands specific to his situation, as Broadie suggested—seems to have, however, a wider support than the just presented option. This support is not due because adopting that option would result a more coherent overall interpretation of *EN 7.3* as a whole—for it does not: as we have seen in section 4.1, a corresponding overall interpretation, e.g. Broadie's interpretation, cannot accommodate *EN 7.3 1147a10-24*, in which Aristotle implies *akrasia* as having but not using knowledge to *differ* from ignorance of the situation-specific moral demands. Rather, its support seems to derive entirely from certain textual considerations that I address below.

Of the most recent interpreters, also Destrée, for example, supports the option that *teleutaia prótasis* is the last, or particular, premise. The akratic must know what is good in general—the universal premise—for acting well, as well as the particular premise, involving the identification of a particular good action. According to Destrée, the cause of (what Charles calls 'weak') akratic acting is this: the bad non-rational desire clouds the identification of the good action in the akratic's moral deliberation and therefore, since there is no contradicting premise in his mind any more, the pleasant, but bad action 'never gets presented as being a non-good' to the akratic, but as an 'only' pleasant action. Due to this momentarily ignorance, the akratic performs the bad instead of the good action.³⁵² We can see this interpretation is quite a different from the interpretation offered by Charles, whom we have seen, in section 4.2 above, to propose that the weak akratic lacks 'confidence' exclusively in

³⁵¹ In the weak akratic's deliberation, as for a virtuous person, the conclusion of practical deliberation is action, as we concluded Aristotle to think in *EN 7.3* on p. 128 above.

³⁵² Destrée 2007, p. 181.

the conclusion of his moral deliberation, in his discernment of the goodness of a certain course of action, while under the strong influence of bad non-rational desire.

Probably the principal textual consideration that has made most interpreters, Broadie and Destreé hesitant to endorse Charles' interpretation, despite its apparent philosophical plausibility, is this: Many interpreters of Aristotle, among whom we find Destreé and also, for example, David Bostock, have remarked, that although it is of course grammatically possible that *prótasis* could refer to proposition instead of premise in *EN 7.3 1147b8-19*, it is nevertheless exegetically rather unjustifiable to assume that *teleutaia prótasis* could possibly refer to the last proposition, that is, to the conclusion of the akratic person's deliberation, in that context. For only few lines before the passage, in section (B), Aristotle uses the term *sumpehranthen* to refer to the conclusion of the akratic's deliberation, and it is unexplainable why he, if the reference remains the same, would suddenly replace the term with another one.³⁵³

Charles has, however, attempted to evade this consideration by proposing that the reference of *teleutaia prótasis* and *sumpehranthen* might nevertheless not be the same: the latter may "refer not to the final proposition (i.e. *teleutaia prótasis*), which emerges from the premisses, but to the action done."³⁵⁴ Although Charles does not elaborate about Aristotle's possible reasons for making such a distinction, I could argue that if the akratic person's deliberation were only assertive, as I have concluded above, then its conclusion would not yet be identical with an action, unlike in the case of a virtuous person's moral deliberation. Here the philosopher would have had a good reason for making the distinction that Charles suggested.

Even if we, however, would accept this point, it might still seem far-fetched to think that Aristotle actually employs such a distinction in *EN 7.3 1147b8-19*, because, as we have seen, even before introducing the concept of *teleutaia prótasis* in that passage, he has *already* specified that *sumpehranthen* is realized in an action only provided that the agent is 'able and not prevented' in *EN 7.3 1147a24-b2*, section (C). Once this qualification is introduced, he could as well have used the term *sumpehranthen* also in *EN 7.3 1147b8-19*, without the risk of his audience getting

³⁵³ Ibid. p. 146 and Bostock 2000, p. 132.

³⁵⁴ Charles 2007, p. 71.

confused about whether it refers to an actual action, or to a propositional conclusion of deliberation that can still be prevented from being realised as an action.³⁵⁵

Due to the ambiguity of the reference of *teleutaia prótasis*, it has now turned out that it is difficult to say which of the two interpretations of the place of akratic's failure in the physical process leading to his bad action we should prefer. From the viewpoint of philosophical charity, we should probably prefer Charles', for it allows us to acknowledge that Aristotle, realistically, allows the existence of a weak akratic, who does not make any mistake in his deliberation, but lacks nevertheless confidence in performing a good action. However, the price of the charity would be that Charles' interpretation would require us to adopt the above unconventional, and perhaps also insufficiently textually justified, reading of the reference of *teleutaia prótasis*.

This interpretational impasse permits me to suspect that neither interpretation about the meaning of *teleutaia prótasis* satisfactorily captures Aristotle's point in using such an ambiguous concept in the conclusions of his account of *akrasia* in a physical manner. I would like to suggest that Aristotle might have chosen an ambiguous term, because he wanted to leave it open whether the akratic has the conclusion, that a certain action is good, in his mind or not, when succumbing to his bad non-rational desire. For if either Broadie, Destreé and others', or Charles' line of interpretation were entirely correct, presumably Aristotle would have chosen a more explicit term—such as *en merei prótasis*, 'the particular premise', or *sumpehranthen*, 'conclusion'—to denote the step of deliberation after the reaching of which the akratic submits to his bad desire. As far as I know, no interpreter has asked why Aristotle might have intentionally left the question about the exact place of the akratic's submission to a bad desire in his order of deliberation so completely open.

Let me attempt, however, to address this issue. Perhaps the philosopher does not

³⁵⁵ Lorenz 2014, p.257, has suggested yet another consideration for taking *teleutaia protasis* to refer to the conclusion. He remarks that Aristotle says *teleutaia protasis* 'determines our actions' in *EN* 7.3 1147b9. According to him, it is hard to see how minor premise could determine our actions unless it necessarily implies conclusion, which it cannot do at the cost of preventing us from considering alternatives, and therefore the *protasis* must be conclusion. I am yet to see a counterargument to this.

even consider important to answer the question that has occupied interpreters for long without producing much clarity to the reference of *teleutaia prótasis*, because he, I believe, can conclude his account on the physical process behind akratic acting without even telling the exact reference of *teleutaia prótasis*. Provided that the akratic deliberation is only assertive, there is no wonder that the akratically-acting person does not obey his deliberation, regardless of at what point it involves ignorance. Unlike interpreters such as Charles and Destreé assume, as I attempt to show next, Aristotle reveals that *akrasia* is not in the strict sense a failure to have (confidence in) a certain proposition—the elusive *teleutaia prótasis*—due to bad moral habituation, although such a phenomenon is involved in all cases of *akrasia*, but derives from the lack of *phronesis*. This might be the only ignorance that *akrasia* has to involve, and thus, Socrates remains right, for he considered only the moral knowledge that is in *phronesis* to be any moral knowledge. That is, although the habituation of desires could probably prevent most cases of *akrasia*—probably even all cases of weak and ignorant *akrasia* by making people to stick more firmly to their premises and conclusions—the philosopher’s view, as I will argue below, is that only the possession of *phronesis*, not just being finely habituated—although *phronesis* presupposes such habituation—makes one invulnerable to all varieties of *akrasia*.

After giving his physical description of *akrasia*, Aristotle concludes in *EN* 7.3:

The position that Socrates sought to establish actually seems to result; for it is not in the presence of what is thought to be knowledge proper (*kyria episteme*) that akratic acting arises (nor is it this that is “dragged about” as a result of the state of passion), but in that of perceptual (*aisthetike*) knowledge. This must suffice as our answer to the question of action with and without knowledge, and how it is possible to act akratically with knowledge.³⁵⁶

Aristotle seems to conclude that Socrates’ conception of *akrasia* could be right insofar as akratic acting is impossible in the presence of proper knowledge (*kyria episteme*). However, akratic acting remains possible if the person has only perceptual knowledge (*aisthetike episteme*). Since understanding of why certain actions are good, namely, on account of their realising *eudaimonia*, is probably the only piece of

³⁵⁶ *EN* 7.3 1147b14–19 (R).

moral knowledge that may qualify as *episteme* in the proper sense—in virtue of the universality and unchangeability³⁵⁷—let me suggest that Aristotle might conclude here that people who do not have this understanding, who do not have *phronesis*, could be vulnerable to acting akratically. So far, many interpreters have, however, suggested a different interpretation. They have not considered that Aristotle could describe the knowledge that akratic does *not have* here. Instead, they have claimed that instead of the knowledge that he lacks, *kyria episteme* refers to the akratic's grasp of universal premises, and *aisthetike episteme* to his discernment of their relevance to his situation; and that the akratic agent's bad desire prevents him from making use of those discernments, or, having confidence in them, as Charles put it.³⁵⁸

I think, however, that this standard reading derives not so much from Aristotle's text—because, as concluded above, an akratic agent's universal premises, e.g. that 'one should not eat sweets' or that 'dry foods are healthy' are not true in any situation unlike *kyria episteme* should be—but from the interpreters not being interested in asking why Aristotle labels the weak akratic's universal premise as *dóxa* in *EN* 7.3 1147a24–5, quoted on p. 127 above. If Aristotle used the word *dóxa* in technical sense—as denoting a proposition of which truth value can change from one situation to another, that is, *an opinion*—he could not, *pace* the standard reading, call later the same premise as *kyria episteme* that is distinct from contingent *dóxa*.

A supporter of the standard reading may now think, however, that the distinction between *episteme* and *dóxa* could not be technical in end of *EN* 7.3, for earlier in the same chapter, in 1146b24–31, Aristotle seems to underplay the significance of the distinction for the question 'whether or not akratics act knowingly (*eidotes*)' (46b6):

As for the suggestion that it is true opinion (*alethes dóxa*) and not knowledge (*episteme*) against which we act incontinently, that makes no difference to the issue (*logos*), for some people when in a state of opinion do not hesitate, but think they know exactly. If, then, the notion is that owing to their weak conviction (*pistis*) those who have opinion are more likely to act against their judgement than those who know, we answer that there need be no difference between knowledge and opinion in this respect; for some men are no less convinced of what they think than others of what they know.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ See *EN* 6.3 1139b19–30, in which Aristotle gives this definition about *episteme*.

³⁵⁸ See p. 125 above.

³⁵⁹ *EN* 7.3. 1146b24–31 (R). Ross' translation for *logos*, 'argument' replaced with 'issue'.

Aristotle says above that the distinction whether we act against knowledge or opinion is not important for the question, because an akratic can have as great confidence to opinion as he has to *episteme*. If one can act even against his confidently held true opinion, then he could also act against his *episteme*. Hence the distinction between opinion and *episteme* seems to provide no ingredients for answering to the question.

This conclusion is, however, in line with my interpretation. For Aristotle's passage, as the philosopher made clear on a line preceding it (*EN* 7.3 1146b19), concerns only the unqualified (*haplos*) *akrasia* that is caused by the desire of improper pleasures. My interpretation suggests, however, that acquiring *episteme* could *only* help already finely habituated people, who have already learnt to desire proper pleasures and are thus invulnerable to this type of *akrasia*. It would enable them to take the step to *phronesis*, and become also invulnerable to other possible types of *akrasia*. Thus, although the lack of moral habituation suffices to account for one's vulnerability to unqualified, or, pleasure-related *akrasia*, the distinction between acting on the basis of opinion and *episteme* can still explain the difference between the people who can overcome *only* this *akrasia*, and those that are invulnerable to all types of *akrasia*. This conclusion would not require us to assume that *kyria episteme* refers to an akratic's true universal opinions, which would be a very unusual way for Aristotle to use the concept, but to understanding why good actions are good, which cannot improve a person's motivation to act well unless he is already finely habituated.

If this is what *kyria episteme* would signify in the conclusion of *EN* 7.3, then *aisthetike episteme* might refer to other moral propositions that a person cognises—to his situation-specific premises pertaining to universals, such as 'do not taste sweets', *pace* the received interpretation, apart from only the premises that refer directly to particulars such as 'this is sweet'. Since 'perceptual knowledge' is thus analogous to a true opinion, just as Aristotle's labelling the akratic's universal premise as *dóxa* signalled, it is *episteme* only in a qualified sense. Elsewhere in *EN*, Aristotle calls true opinions that pertain to acting as 'practical knowledge' (*episteme praktike*).³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ See *EN* 6.8 1141b3042–a11. Aristotle says there that *phronesis* is identified especially with practical knowledge. This should not, however, be taken to mean (*pace* Broadie and McDowell) that

Assuming that an akratically-acting person does not understand that acting well is *eudaimonia*, and as such does not have *phronesis*, he acts without *kyria episteme*, and can thus be said to be ignorant (*agnoios*)—as he must be if Aristotle is to save Socrates' thesis that all bad acting results from ignorance—although he may act badly knowingly of both universal and particular premises. However, as both kinds of premises (even though the former do not directly refer to particulars), are only opinions, and hence contingent, his knowledge is only of particulars, or, 'practical knowledge.' Since identifying a good action does not presuppose knowledge of the nature of *eudaimonia*, but only *synesis*, which is the practical knowledge of the actions that most people would approve in an agent's situation, such knowledge should enable him to identify a good action and choose to perform it as good. It is only that his unhabituated non-rational desire may lead him to temporarily ignore his particular premises, or lack confidence in the conclusion of his moral deliberation.

Since the text of *EN* 7.3 thus supports my assumption that weak akratic acting is possible whenever one does not have the understanding of why good actions are good (*kyria episteme*), we may proceed to showing which kind of *akrasia*, then, cannot be cured by moral habituation only. Before this, however, I attempt to show the compatibility of my interpretation with Aristotle's views on *enkrateia*—that, despite implying that both akratic and enkratic people are vulnerable to weak *akrasia*, it can nevertheless acknowledge that those character states do not only differ *in the degree* of their vulnerability to surrendering to bad desires, but also *in kind*. The finely-habituated people are not enkratic, because they are insusceptible to weak *akrasia*, but they must nevertheless be prone to some type of *akrasia* on account of lacking *kyria episteme*. At least the type cannot be ignorant *akrasia* discussed because those people have all the premises that they need for identifying good actions. But there is yet another type of *akrasia*, impetuous *akrasia*, or, acting against one's moral knowledge from anger (*thumos*), which, I argue, is a motivation different from non-rational desire. I attempt to show that the philosopher's discussion of anger in *EN* 7.6 (and elsewhere) allows that even a person, who has completed his moral

phronesis is all about practical knowledge, since in *EN* 6.7 Aristotle has just said that it is also concerned with universals, i.e., the objects of proper knowledge.

habituation but lacks *kyria episteme* can fall to acting akratically while angry. This vulnerability could, I argue, make the moral difference between him and the virtuous person, who has *phronesis*, and thus also *kyria episteme*, and establish that avoiding excessive anger is a moral reason for a finely-habituated person to acquire *phronesis*.

4.4 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *AKRASIA* AND *ENKRATEIA*

If understanding why certain actions are good, on account of realising *eudaimonia*,—which is constitutive to *phronesis*—differentiates fully virtuous people from those who are vulnerable to akratic acting in certain extent, as I have argued, then even enkratic and finely-habituated people must be vulnerable to akratic acting. Therefore, I face a challenge in explaining now, what—if not invulnerability to akratic acting, as is often claimed—is the difference that warrants considering the enkratic a different type of character from the akratic. Only once this difference is clarified can I proceed to explain how even finely-habituated people could be vulnerable to akratic acting.

According to the received interpretation, an enkratic person never acts akratically, which defines his character as enkratic.³⁶¹ Nevertheless, I assume that he may still act akratically, but this is far less likely than in the case of an akratic. Although interpreters do not usually even consider the alternative that I present—thus making the received interpretation seem uncontroversial—Aristotle’s famous definition of *enkrateia* in *EN* 7.9 permits it. His words—‘the enkratic abides by his choice more and the akratic man less than the most men’—do not amount to denying that the enkratic could act akratically. The philosopher’s words in *EN* 7.7, that an enkratic ‘is victorious (*to nikan*) over’³⁶² his bad desires rather suggests that he does not always overcome them, for no one is always victorious, but victory in a contest (*nike*) is achievement that one can hardly repeat without sometimes losing. Therefore, instead of a question about the possibility of acting akratically, perhaps, for example, the fact that only an akratic person acts akratically *characteristically* could amount to the difference between the two types of character. For since the enkratic has a good

³⁶¹ See e.g. Irwin 2007, p. 154, for the traditional division between *enkrateia*, *akrasia*, and virtue.

³⁶² *EN* 7.7 1150a35.

(*spoudaios*) character, we may think that he characteristically acts well and only exceptionally akratically, and *vice versa* for the akratic. Asking what mode of acting is characteristic to a person, we may assume, would probably be a more natural way of defining his character than asking what mode is ever possible to him. Aristotle seems to hold this view, for he acknowledges that ‘most people are in between [akratic and enkratic]’,³⁶³ which he could not have said if he thought that only a person who never acts akratically can be enkratic, as the received interpretation implies. For in that case, a person who has periods of *akrasia* and *enkrateia*, like most of us, would not be in between these two types of character, but only akratic.

Amelié Rorty has arrived at a rather similar conclusion as a result of studying the moral differences between an enkratic and a morally virtuous person. She points out that as far as a virtuous person’s non-rational desire is habituated to pursuing virtuous ends, he must be ‘more motivationally secure’ than an enkratic person, whose desires run against one another.³⁶⁴ On my interpretation, this is not, however, the only difference between them, because apart from the superior moral habituation that a finely-habituated person has undergone, the properly virtuous person also has *phronesis*. If we acknowledge this, then my interpretation, which allows even *enkrates* to occasionally act akratically, is more compatible with the conclusion of *EN 7.3* than the received interpretation of *enkrateia*. While concluding *EN 7.3*, Aristotle says, as we have seen, that *akrasia* does ‘not occur in the presence of proper knowledge’, which, we have learned, is the understanding that acting well is *eudaimonia*. As only *phronesis* enables such understanding, Aristotle’s conclusion would imply that all other people, such as the enkratic or even the finely-habituated, are vulnerable to akratic acting (in the extent determined by their moral habituation).

My interpretation might, however, be criticised on the basis of Aristotle’s statement in *EN 7.9*: ‘bodily pleasures do not make [an enkratic person] act against reason’.³⁶⁵ If the enkratic people were vulnerable to akratic acting, then Aristotle

³⁶³ *EN 7.7* 1150a15: Aristotle continues by admitting that most people ‘incline more toward the worse disposition’, i.e., are closer to the akratic than the enkratic.

³⁶⁴ See Rorty 1984, p. 274. Since her interpretation, also e.g. Broadie 1991, p.308 fn. 11, p.152, Drefcinski 2000, pp.115-116 and Lorenz 2009, p. 188, have reached similar conclusions.

³⁶⁵ *EN 7.9*. 1 151b34–52a1.

should have admitted that an enkratic person occasionally acts akratically, unlike the virtuous person, but here he seems to state the contrary: that the enkratic abstains from performing bad actions entirely, just as a virtuous person.³⁶⁶ I think, however, that such criticism would be misguided. For even if enkratic people could act akratically, this would not yet imply that an enkratic person would ever act akratically. An enkratic may manage to always resist his bad, non-rational desire for pleasure, but his resistance would be accidental. Maybe the enkratic is simply not prone, on account of his decent upbringing, to experience very intense temptations. It could be, however, that if he ever experienced such a temptation, he could act akratically.³⁶⁷ This conclusion would be consistent with what Aristotle ever says about *enkrateia*, and he never says that it is ‘firm and unchangeable’, like virtue.³⁶⁸

4.5 ONLY *PHRONESIS* CAN PREVENT IMPETUOUS *AKRASIA*

We become able to resist inappropriate pleasures through habituation. In addition to enkratic people, who are tempted by inappropriate pleasures, but capable of resisting them on account of their decent habituation, we can thus also conceive a person, who has had such a good habituation that inappropriate pleasures do not tempt them at all. Even this person does not, however, have to be a *phronimos*, because habituation does not develop the virtues of thought. But since only *phronimoi* ‘never do anything they need to regret,’ also the finely-habituated type of character should thus have some vulnerability to akratic acting.³⁶⁹ This may seem, however, contradictory: if

³⁶⁶ Gould 1994, 180–1, and Broadie 1991, p. 285.

³⁶⁷ Now, an objector might comment that if enkratic (or finely-habituated) people who have successfully overcome their non-rational desire for pleasure were still vulnerable to anger, Aristotle would not have said in *EN* 2.3 1105a8 (R), quoting Heraclitus, that ‘it is harder to fight with pleasure than with anger’, but *vice versa*. This would not, however, be a powerful objection to my interpretation, since I acknowledge that learning to control one’s desire for pleasure might be a far more challenging developmental step to take than learning to control anger; I only claim that the latter step can only be taken after the former has been successfully taken.

³⁶⁸ *EN* 2.2 1105a34–b1.

³⁶⁹ See *EN* 9.4 1166a26–29, according to which *phronimos* never has to regret anything, i.e. he never acts badly. However, according *Pol.* 7.13 1332b6–7, ‘people’, which must thus refer to ‘the people apart from *phronimoi*’, i.e. also to the finely habituated, can act against their ‘habit and nature.’ Aristotle explicates in the passage of *EN* 9.4 that *phronimos* always acts well due to him enjoying and being pained at only right things. However, since already habituation develops such a disposition, and since not all our bad actions seem to be caused by unhabituated sensibilities to pain and pleasure (for

bad pleasures do not tempt a finely-habituated person, he should be invulnerable to acting akratically in the situations of most irresistible sensual temptations, in which even an *enkrates* may occasionally surrender. However, although sensual pleasures are the most typical motivations of *akrasia*, I show next that Aristotle does not think that only non-rational desire for them may motivate akratic acting. Perhaps even the most finely-habituated person remains vulnerable to some other varieties of akratic conduct, against which only *phronesis* can protect.

The philosopher thinks that apart from rational and non-rational desire, our moral motivation is affected also by a number of emotions. As Aristotle puts it in *EN* 2.5: ‘by emotions (*pathe*), I mean non-rational desire (*epithumia*), anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendliness, hatred, longing, emulation, pity...’³⁷⁰ It may now seem possible that some of those emotions could motivate independently of non-rational desire, and thus, their motivating force may not depend on how finely one’s non-rational desires have been habituated. Aristotle continues the previous sentence, however, by adding that emotions are ‘...in general, all feelings accompanied by pleasure or pain.’³⁷¹ This addition may change our previous impression: by connecting emotions with pleasure and pain, the philosopher seems to deny that emotions can be independent from non-rational desire, the characteristic end of which is pleasure.³⁷² He continues by denying that emotions (apart from the non-rational desire, of course) are morally evaluable: ‘we are neither called good or bad on account of our [other] emotions, but are so called on account of our virtues and vices.’³⁷³ Our non-rational desires result from chosen habits, but we are not responsible of our other emotions, because we cannot rationally choose them, they are in us by nature.³⁷⁴ If emotions are not morally evaluable as such, and if they

some such actions can be due to mistaken deliberation or the lack of knowledge as well), that cannot be the *whole* explanation for why *phronimos* never acts badly. Just a few lines earlier, the philosopher has, however, already remarked that the *phronimos*’ moral beliefs are harmonious and he has a developed *dianoetikon* (1166a13-19), which could be taken to complement the previous explanation.

³⁷⁰ *EN* 2.5 1105b21-2 (R).

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* b23 (R).

³⁷² Aquinas offers this interpretation in e.g. *ST* IIaIIae q. 148 a. 1: ‘properly speaking, anger is the passion of sensitive appetite.’ Cf. IIaIIae q. 148 a. 2 and IaIIae q. 46 a. 1.

³⁷³ *EN* 2.5 1105a30. See also the passages quoted in the next footnote below.

³⁷⁴ *EN* 2.5 1105 8-10: ‘we are neither called good nor bad, nor praised nor baled simply on account of having the faculty of feeling emotions; again, we have the faculties by nature, but we are not made

motivate us to action by triggering a non-rational desire of pleasure (or aversion of pain) in us—then it may seem that non-rational desire is behind all akratic conduct.

However, in *EE* 2.7, Aristotle declares that besides rational and non-rational desires, *thumos*, or, the emotion of anger, is ‘one of the three species of motivation (*orexis*).’³⁷⁵ By placing anger in the same level with the desires, Aristotle may seem to signal that at least that emotion does not have only the role of triggering the non-rational desire, which, in turn, actually causes our action, but can motivate also on its own. Even if other emotions motivated only through sensations of pleasure and pain, anger could thus perhaps be the emotional force that could motivate even a person with finely habituated non-rational desire to act against his rational desire, and thus only *phronimos* could fully control it with his virtue of thought (I explain how *phronesis* could prevent akratic anger on pp. 148-9 below). But we should not be too hasty in drawing this conclusion. For in *Rhet.* 2.2, in contrast to *EE* 2.7, Aristotle seems to consider anger only a trigger for a non-rational desire and not a force capable of motivating action on its own. In that passage, the philosopher uses the word *orge* instead of *thumos*. Although not all scholars take *orge* be identical with *thumos*, in any case, these two concepts are so close that both can be, and very often are, translated as ‘anger.’³⁷⁶ Let me now quote the passage that defines anger:

Anger (*orge*) may be defined as a motivation that involves pain (*meta lupe*) to an apparent revenge for an apparent slight directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or towards what concerns one's friends. If this is a proper definition of anger, it must always be felt towards some particular individual, e.g. Cleon, and not 'man' in general. Anger must be felt because the other has done or intended to do something to him or one of his friends, and all anger is attended by a certain pleasure (*pasei orgei epesthai tina hedone*) - that which arises from the expectation of revenge. For since nobody aims at what he thinks he cannot attain, the angry man is aiming at what he can attain, and the belief that you will attain your aim is pleasant. Hence it has been well said about anger, ‘Sweeter it is by far than the honeycomb dripping with sweetness, and spreads through the hearts of men.’ It is attended by pleasure because the thoughts dwell upon the act of revenge, and the

good or bad by nature, as we have discussed before (i.e. in *EN* 2.1, in which Aristotle argues that we are made good or bad by habituation. In *EN* 3.5, the philosopher adds that our habituation is up to our choice in a great extent, for ‘the things contributing to the end we deliberated about and choose’ (*EN* 3.5 1113b2-3) ... and so ‘men are themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in that they [have chosen to] cheat or spend their time in drinking dens and the like’ (*EN* 3.5 1114a5-6).

³⁷⁵ *EE* 2.7 1123a26-7: ‘anger (*thumos*) is one of three species of motivation (*orexis*)’. Cf. *Rhet* 10.1 1369a7: ‘irrational motivations (*alogistikei orexeis*) are anger and non-rational desire (*epithumia*).’

³⁷⁶ Pearson (2012) argues for the equivalence of *thumos* and *orge* on pp. 111-16 by pointing out that in many places Aristotle uses those nouns and related verbs interchangeably (esp. in *DA* 1.1). See Natali (2007), pp. 114, for the view that *thumos* is the faculty of anger of which actualization *orge* is.

phantasmata then called up cause pleasure, like the *phantasmata* called up in dreams.

Aristotle first remark is that anger arises from an unjustified slight. Since slights are by particular people towards other people, anger cannot be felt towards people in general, but only towards particular people. Anger is a motivation to revenge³⁷⁷ the perceived slights of certain people to those people.³⁷⁸ The philosopher states next that anger is a painful emotion, but it is also attended by great pleasure that an angry person receives while contemplating realising his revenge. Clearly, this statement seems to imply that anger, after all, motivates through the non-rational desire of pleasure, which suggests that habituation to proper pleasures would also enable one to control his anger apart from other emotions. I think, however, that her Aristotle does not have to be watering down the statement of *EE* 2.7 that elevates anger as self-standing source of motivation, because his writing in the above passage reveals that anger is not pleasant *as such*. For the desire of pleasure that attends all anger comes from a judgement—from ‘thoughts dwelling upon the act of revenge’—not from anger itself. The *phantasmata* that these judgements conjure up cause the pleasure that attends anger. In itself, anger is only painful, a point that Aristotle makes many times in *EE* and *EN*.³⁷⁹ Hence it is plausible to conclude that anger

³⁷⁷ Cf. Cooper (1999), which argues that instead of revenge, what in fact motivates anger is ‘the noble.’ For Aristotle says in *EN* 2.3 1104b30, ‘there are three objects of choice: the noble (*to kalon*), the useful (*to sumpheron*), and the pleasant (*to hēdu*).’ Provided that non-rational desire pursues pleasure, and rational one what is good, or useful, then anger, claims Cooper (pp. 255-6), should pursue the noble. I think this passage is, however, hardly sufficient for justifying Cooper’s interpretation (it is esp. doubtful if Aristotle would ever mean ‘good’ by the word ‘useful’), and even if we accepted Cooper’s claim, I would not need to change my interpretation about what for the angry person is motivated to act. As Pearson (2012) has remarked (on pp.135-6), anger can be a motivation only for revenge even if its end were the noble. Since Aristotle never claims that angry person is aiming at noble just because he is angry (only that anger helps courageous people in pursuing the noble in *EN* 3.8 1116b30–31), but only that the angry person aims at revenge – the noble, says Pearson, could at the most be only *de re* end of anger – of which the angry person is not even conscious; the angry person’s *de dicto* end, the end that he actually has in his mind and that motivates him to act, would be to only revenge the apparent slight.

³⁷⁸ This definition is considerably narrower than the way in which the word *orge* and *thumos* were used in ancient Greek, or the word ‘anger’ is used today, so presumably Aristotle would consider the various other ways of using the word derivate from this use: e.g. if one says to be angry at the entire world, he is generalising his anger towards certain specific people.

³⁷⁹ *EN* 7.6 1149b22. Cf. *EE* 3.3 1231b6 ‘...pains arise from *thumos*’ and b15 ‘we call that pain *thumos*’, *Pol.* 5.10 ‘...anger (*orge*) is accompanied by pain’ and *Rhet.* 2.2 1378a30-2 ‘anger is desire that involves pain (*meta lupe*) for a apparent revenge owing to an apparent slight.’ In 1378b2-9, Aristotle adds, however, that anger is ‘attended by a certain pleasure—that which arises from the

could motivate action on its own, and without being only a trigger for a motivating non-rational desire, as his statement in *EE* 2.7 about the position of anger as the third species of moral motivation apart from rational and non-rational desire implies.³⁸⁰

Since we have seen that anger does not motivate action through triggering a non-rational desire, we may now conclude that even the best of habituation of non-rational desires could not prevent one from acting against his rational desire while angry. The question that remains is what, if not habituation, then, is a guarantee against excessive anger that may lead even a finely-habituated person to act akratically. I have suggested above that *phronesis* gives this guarantee, because only a *phronimos*, we have concluded, never acts badly, and he differs from an only finely-habituated person insofar as he has the virtue of *phronesis* and that person does not. So as to see how *phronesis* enables one to handle his anger well in all situations, we might study *EN* 7.6, in which the philosopher describes *akrasia* with regard to anger in detail, illuminating the psychological relation between anger and reason:

We will now consider the fact that *akrasia* related to anger (*to thymou*) is less shameful than the form relating to desire (*ton epithymion*). For anger seems to hear reason in some way, but to mishear it, like swift servants who run off before they hear what is said in its entirety and then they err in carrying out the command, or, as dogs bark if there is merely a knock at the door, before examining it is a friend. So, anger, because of its heated and swift nature, hears something and though it does not hear an order, it sets off to revenge. For talk or *phantasia* has made clear that there is a hubristic insult or slight, and anger, as if it inferred from syllogism that one ought to wage war against such a thing, immediately becomes harsh. But as for (non-rational) desire (*epithymia*), if reason (*logos*) or *phantasia* merely says

expectation of revenge.’ Anger is, however, not pleasant *as such*, because anger is non-rational and the accompanying desire of pleasure is rational, based on thoughts (*Rhet.* 2.4 1378b7-8: ‘[an angry person’s] thoughts dwell upon the act of vengeance, and the *phantasmata* then called up cause the pleasure’), and thus a finely habituated person can control that desire; it does not cause his anger to become excessive.

³⁸⁰ If not pleasure, perhaps, then, the pain involved in anger causes an angry person to pursue revenge so as to get right of the anger, which would still allow an angry person’s motivation to be a result of non-rational desire. However, fear, which seems to be the only exclusively painful emotion besides anger in Aristotle, causes non-rational desire to escape the source of pain so as to get rid of the pain as quickly as possible, while anger causes one to attack the slighting person, even if forgetting his slight was a quicker way to escape the pain of being angry than attacking him. In this respect, an angry person is quite unlike the fearful person, but resembles more a courageous person, who wants to stay in a battle despite his great pains.

³⁸⁰ The courageous person stands, however, firm in the battle and faces pains thanks to his judgement to act well, but because anger does not involve any value judgement as such, an analogous explanation could not apply to the angry person. E.g. in *Rhet.* 2.4 1381a12, Aristotle denies that feeling injustice, lack of good sense, and hatred involves pain, but says that anger does. He does not consider any additional emotions as being potentially painful apart from fear, which, he says, is ‘pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful event in future.’ (*Rhet.* 2.5 1382a22-3) (RR).

that something is pleasant, it sets off after enjoyment. As a result, anger follows reason in a way, but desire does not. It is therefore more shameful; for a man who acts akratically with regard to anger in a way obeys reasoning, whereas the other sort is giving in to desire and not to reasoning.³⁸¹

In the above passage, Aristotle seems to attempt to justify the lesser shamefulness of acting irrationally while angry to weak *akrasia*. Aristotle's concern for defending the lesser shamefulness of excessive anger against pleasure-seeking may seem odd, as it is hard to see how displaying violence against others for no proportionate reason on their part, and perhaps even harming the others, would need to be any less shameful than, e.g., eating too many sweets.³⁸² Provided that Aristotle permits, however, that a finely-habituated person, who is immune to weak akratic acting, could be excessively violent, he must also think that impetuous *akrasia* is less shameful than weak *akrasia*. Otherwise, he would have ended up with the unattractive conclusion that a person with a *more* finely-habituated character may have *as* shameful moral weaknesses as one with a *less* finely-habituated character.³⁸³ Now, in order to justify the lesser shamefulness of the anger-related *akrasia* compared to ordinary *akrasia*, Aristotle presents an argument that mishearing reason, which is involved in excessive anger, is less bad than not having confidence in reason—as in the case of weak *akrasia*—because mishearing seems to be nevertheless hearing reason 'in a way'. A person who acts badly due to mishearing his reason at least has a conviction to listen her reason, whereas a weak akratic lacks even this conviction due to her bad, non-rational desire. How the angry akratic, then, exactly fails to hear his reason?

Earlier in the passage, Aristotle stated anger to be 'heated and swift', and mishear reason just as 'too hasty' servants may mishear their orders. Interpreters tend to disagree about the point of this analogue, as the text is not decisive here. Recently, Irwin and Broadie with Rowe have suggested that the akratic's anger may make a

³⁸¹ *EN* 7.6 1149a24–b1 (R).

³⁸² This is Aristotle's classic example of ordinary *akrasia* in *EN* 7.3 1147a25-b5

³⁸³ There might be also cultural reasons, because it seems that in a world before political correctness, even excessive anger did not label a person as outright bad: e.g. Achilles bursts into uncontrollable anger after the death of Patrocles, disregarding his personal honour or that of his *polis*, ending up in a defamation of Hector's body and his own death (Aristotle mentions this as an example of impetuous *akrasia* in *Rhet.*, 1.3 1358b38-59a5), Ajax kills himself after suffering public humiliation and Medea, a faithful wife, wants to revenge his unfaithful husband, but ends up killing his own children in rage.

misjudgement about the good course of action, and that is why he shall react excessively to the insult.³⁸⁴ Alternatively, the akratic's reason may make the judgement about the necessity of revenge, but 'hears' it as an order to act violently, and therefore rushes to excessively violent revenge without deliberation. On this reading, anger would motivate revenge without rational desire. The section that comes after the analogue clarifies that this latter option is probably right. According to Aristotle, 'reason or imagination' makes it evident for a person that there has been a slight, which deserves revenge. Anger does not thus seem to affect judgement, but reason or imagination affects anger; it hears an order to act, and bad action results.

Interpreters also disagree about Aristotle's successive notion that an angry akratic behaves as if inferring a mistaken conclusion from a syllogism. Recently, Richard Bodeüs has claimed that this may mean that anger makes the akratic to infer that he has been insulted. If this was right, it would be also the underlying cause of the akratic's rational or imagined judgement, and so anger would motivate through rational desire after all. However, it would be perhaps closer to Aristotle's 'as if' - qualification to think that his talk about syllogism in anger is metaphorical. Giles Pearson has recently taken up this view, and suggested that anger differs from non-rational desire insofar as it resembles a rational desire in a qualified way, whereas latter does not resemble it at all. This is how anger could be hearing a reason 'in a way.' Instead of reacting to the judgement of reason about the need for revenge by deliberating about how to revenge, anger 'misses out' this part of the 'fully rational response' and prompts the agent to impulsive violent reaction.³⁸⁵ Hence, for Pearson, anger seems to be a 'quasi-rational' desire, which, in the case of akratic, leads him to fail to deliberate before action. I think, however, that this conclusion according to which anger is prompted by rational judgement is no more plausible than assuming, with Bodeüs, that anger results the rational judgement. For Aristotle does not in fact say that anger is prompted by judgement, but only that it upon mishearing an order immediately sets after revenge. Carlo Natali has remarked that one can mishear that

³⁸⁴ See Irwin 1999, p. 106, Natali 1999, p. 279 and Broadie & Rowe 2001, p. 127.

³⁸⁵ Pearson 2012, p. 137.

there is an order even before a judgement is made.³⁸⁶ This is exactly what a too hasty servant does in Aristotle's analogue. Hence it seems that in Aristotle, anger can fail to hear reason by neither causing wrong judgements, nor inferring hasty conclusions, but simply hearing an order to act, when there is not judgement yet.

The previous conclusion, that an angry person hears an order to act when there is no judgement for such acting yet, would imply that anger-related *akrasia* belongs to the type of *akrasia* that Aristotle mentions in *EN 7.7*, 'impetuous *akrasia*':

One kind of *akrasia* is impetuosity, another weakness; some people deliberate but then do not abide by their deliberations on account of passions, while others, because they do not deliberate, are led by the passions.³⁸⁷

In above passage, Aristotle differentiates the impetuous (*propeteia*) *akrasia* from weak *akrasia* by stating that while 'some people' deliberate before acting akratically, 'the others' do not. As we have seen above, the former, that is, weak akratics, act badly because their non-rational desire undermines their confidence to their right judgement, but the philosopher claims that the latter, impetuous people act against their rational commitments *because* they have not deliberated. Evidently, angry akratics that act before having even formed a judgement must be among the latter.

This observation, I believe, is crucial for seeing how *phronesis* could make one invulnerable to akratic acting even if unjustifiably slighted. Although a finely-habituated person does not desire bad pleasures, his habituation might not have fully ensured that he also deliberates before he acts, as habituation concerns the non-rational (*alogikon*) aspect of soul, and deliberation is an activity of another, rational (*logikon*) aspect. Since deliberating well (*to eu bouleuesthai*), Aristotle tells us in *EN 6.7*, is 'the mark (*semeion*) of *phronimos*',³⁸⁸ the finely-habituated person would

³⁸⁶ Natali 2007, p. 117. Aspasius thinks the same: 'although reason has in no way said nor has there occurred an impression that it must take revenge, one's temper leaps to it, as though it had been ordered to take revenge.' (*Comm.* 127,11-12)

³⁸⁷ *EN 7.7* 1150b19–21 (B & C).

³⁸⁸ *EN 6.7* 1141b9–10; see also 6.5, 1140a25–8: 'It is thought to be a mark of a person of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, for example, about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general.'

need to also be *phronimos* in order to excel in deliberation. For the term ‘mark’ (*semeion*) probably signals here that a *phronimos*’ ability to deliberate well is the feature that renders him a distinct character-type. As Aristotle puts it, ‘a person who excels at deliberating has *phronesis*’.³⁸⁹ Hence it seems that a *phronimos*, or, a virtuous person, should thank his ability to take a time for deliberation before each potentially fatal action for his invulnerability to akratic acting even while angry.

Provided that his tendency of deliberating well separates a properly virtuous person from an only finely-habituated person, and that excessive, akratic anger is caused by a lack of deliberation, as Aristotle indicates in *EN* 7.7, then even finely-habituated people are vulnerable to such anger, unlike virtuous people. The philosopher seems to admit this in *Rhet.* 2.14: ‘the youth are impetuous (*thumikoi*) and quickly angered (*oxuthumoi*)’,³⁹⁰ and therefore they are ‘more courageous (*andreioteroi*)’³⁹¹ than the old, ‘although intemperate.’³⁹² As the youth cannot be properly virtuous, for young people do not have *phronesis*, they cannot have *the virtue of courage*, although they seem to be are akratic or enkratic neither—for in that case it would be too much to say they are courageous. In a demanding situation, an akratic would act like a coward, and an enkratic would at least desire to run away, which, Aristotle maintains in *EN* 2.3, prevents attributing courage even to him.³⁹³ So, Aristotle must mean that impetuosity—which is complemented by their noble desires and lack of fear, renders the finely-habituated youth *close* of being properly virtuous. They remain courageous, but become also patient and temperate, thus making their courage into a virtue, once they acquire *phronesis* to complement their fine character.

4.6 THE SECOND AND FINAL STEP: *PHRONESIS* AND MORAL VIRTUE

In this chapter, I completed my reconstruction of Aristotle's theory of moral development. The moral reason for the finely-habituated person to take the final step

³⁸⁹ *EN* 6.5 1140a30.

³⁹⁰ *Rhet.* 2.14 1389a9.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.* 1390b5.

³⁹² *Ibid.* 1389a35-b1.

³⁹³ See *EN* 2.3 1104b6-8: ‘he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is courageous, while the man who is pained (i.e. an *enkrates*) is coward.’

in his moral development, I argued, to acquire *phronesis* is to become invulnerable to akratic acting. In section 4.3, I concluded that Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia* in *EN* 7.3 implies that anyone who does not understand why certain actions are good (*orthos logos*)—the moral understanding that a *phronimos* possesses—must be vulnerable to akratic acting to some extent; but less the more finely-habituated his character is. In 4.4, I applied this interpretation to *EN* 7.9 and *enkrateia* first, and showed that Aristotle could think that although an *enkratic* characteristically acts well thanks to his better-than-average moral habituation, even he may act akratically on occasion. After this, I continued to show how even a finely-habituated person might be vulnerable to *akrasia*, although not to the unqualified pleasure-related variety, but for example to the impetuous *akrasia* that Aristotle introduces in *EN* 7.6 and 7.7. Habituating desires can prevent the former *akrasia*, but not impetuous *akrasia*. For impetuous *akrasia* results from a lack of deliberation, and fine habituation of desires does not yet have to make one's moral deliberation excellent. The invulnerability of the virtuous person to *akrasia* must thus be the achievement of his *phronesis*, which enables a finely-habituated person to also deliberate excellently.

CONCLUSION

In my thesis, I have attempted to reconstruct Aristotle's theory of moral development. My aim has been to study it as a worked-out theory about development of character, rather than as a collection of insights that can provide useful guidance to our contemporary theories, if further worked-out by contemporary researchers. Recently, the latter approach has received significant attention from psychologists and education theorists. The former approach has, however, remained the province of only few Aristotle interpreters. It was first introduced in Myles Burnyeat's 1980 paper, *Aristotle on Learning to Be Good*. He attempted to study Aristotle's theory of moral development without first asking how could we utilise it in contemporary theories of moral development. Since then, Burnyeat's interpretation has been the

point of reference for most of those few interpreters, who have expanded it without questioning it. Only recently has Howard Curzer challenged Burnyeat.

These interpretations are, however, only selective reconstructions of Aristotle's theory of moral development, and omit certain important issues altogether: the questions of whether we need the rational aspect of our soul to discern good actions or only for instrumental reasoning, of how we become responsible for our actions, and of how developing reason can affect moral motivation, if it can at all. Unlike Aristotle's theory of moral development as such, these questions have received considerable scholarly attention, but almost always in isolation from that theory—although it seems that they are tied to moral development. Therefore my aim was to create a reconstruction of Aristotle's theory of moral development that deals primarily with these questions. I endorsed an assumption that such a reconstruction might expose some unnoticed problems in Burnyeat and Curzer on one hand, and, by bringing Aristotle's writings on moral development to bear on the above questions, also bring new insights into currently existing scholarship about them on the other.

In Chapter 1 of my thesis, I discussed the question of whether we need to use reason to identify good actions, which would determine whether we should consider Aristotle to think that acquiring virtue also requires training our rational capacities. Although most interpreters—'the rationalists'—think that according to Aristotle we need reason for identifying good actions, a significant minority of interpreters has traditionally argued that we do not need reason for this purpose. I pointed out that Aristotle might be read as supporting such 'anti-rationalism' in *EN* 2.1 and 3.5: in the former passage he says that we acquire moral virtue by habit, not by teaching, as opposed to the virtue of thought, and in the latter that we do not deliberate about what to pursue by acting. I also showed that there is, however, a reason why not many interpreters have supported this interpretation. For example, in *EN* 1.13, Aristotle seems to argue that cognising value is a task of the rational aspect of soul, and in 6.13 he claims that moral virtue presupposes practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which he would not presumably have said if he thought that we could identify good actions without involving the rational aspect, and acquire virtue by only habituation.

This traditional defence of Aristotle's rationalism turned out, however, to require further reinforcement. Recently, Jessica Moss has argued that the anti-rationalist interpretation could accommodate *EN* 1.13, 6.13, and other seemingly rationalist passages with the help of some of Aristotle's claims in *DA* 3. According to him, the non-rational mental faculty of *phantasia* receives all our appearances about the world, including those of goodness, and the rational aspect of soul may only be needed to conceptualise those appearances. Moss' interpretation was, however, unable to account for Aristotle's views on the psychological basis of moral responsibility. According to him, people's becoming responsible for their actions presupposes that they have made, or at least could have been able to make, a choice to perform to either good or bad actions before being habituated to act in a certain way. However, if our conception of 'a good action' were only conceptualisation for the discernment of a non-rational faculty, as we saw Moss to have argued, its content would be determined by our habituation. In this case, we could not identify good actions before our character had been habituated, contrary to what Aristotle thinks.

In the beginning of Chapter 2, I had already concluded that identifying good actions, and, thus also becoming morally virtuous, presupposes having developed the rational aspect of the soul. In light of this conclusion, it appeared, however, strange that Aristotle nevertheless says in *EN* 2.1 that virtue comes from the habituation of the non-rational aspect. He also says, however, that this habituation involves a teacher. This may seem to indicate, as Myles Burnyeat has interpreted Aristotle's theory of moral development to imply, that someone must first tell children about good actions, and on the basis of this externally-given knowledge, they can develop fine characters entirely through habituation (although for full moral virtue, *phronesis* is also required). I demonstrated that there is, however, a problem with Burnyeat's interpretation. According to *EN* 1.4 and 10.9, a person can be receptive to moral instruction only if he already has a finely-habituated character. If a teacher tried to tell an unhabituated child about good actions, his effort would probably be wasted.

I sided with Howard Curzer so as to avoid this problem. I followed his recent interpretation in arguing that the teacher involved in habituation may not explicitly tell the child about good actions, but rather punish him for bad actions. Such concrete

guidance, which does not need to involve theoretical instruction, can eventually develop a sense of shame in a young person, which naturally motivates him to steer away from acting badly and act well instead. I discovered, however, that even Curzer does not avoid another problem that he shares with Burnyeat and also Moss. Provided that we develop our moral character through a form of habituation that is externally conditioned—whether through punishment or teaching—it is unclear how we could ever be able to develop an ability to choose how to habituate ourselves, which is needed for moral responsibility. It seemed to me, however, that Curzer’s interpretation could avoid this problem, unlike Burnyeat’s. For Aristotle thinks that avoiding bad actions is not the same as performing good actions. Therefore there was space in Curzer’s interpretation for an account how one could identify good actions with neither having been taught them nor having yet acquired a moral character.

Unfortunately Curzer’s interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of moral development fell short of noticing the above possibility. However, I discovered that in *EN* 6.10 Aristotle may describe the ability to reliably identify good actions on the basis of other people’s opinions—an ability that most people come to have by nature. I interpreted that having this ability, *synesis*, does not, however, have to imply any motivation to act well, and thus it could be available also to people without habituated characters. Hence I concluded that they could thus use it to rationally choose the direction of their moral habituation, and become morally responsible.

In Chapter 3, I first focused on *synesis*. For I noticed that if good actions are good for different reasons in different situations, as they are for Aristotle, we may wonder how anyone could identify a good action without fully understanding why it is good. Since no cognitive ability short of *phronesis* can give such moral understanding, this concern favours interpretations, such as John McDowell’s, according to which a person needs *phronesis*, i.e. not only *synesis*, to identify good actions. However, I argued that those interpretations suffer from some exegetical inconsistencies and, moreover, that there is a plausible alternative to them. As the alternative, we could apply what Aristotle says about identifying instances of natural kinds to his moral epistemology. David Charles has concluded in his study of *A. Po.*, in which Aristotle discusses this topic, that if we were uncertain about whether some material is, e.g.

‘gold’, or not, Aristotle would advise us to ask a master goldsmith. Whether he identifies that material as ‘gold’ or not suffices as the epistemic basis for our identification. The master is a reliable guide, because he has experience of the fact that only that certain material enable him to perform his work successfully. Likewise, I argued, we could also identify good actions by consulting other people, without us having acquired rational understanding of why certain actions are good.

In the second half of Chapter 3, I studied further how profound moral understanding, or, *phronesis*, is acquired to complement *synesis*. Because *phronesis* that perfects fine habits into moral virtue is a virtue of thought, developing it must require some teaching. In *EN* 1.4, Aristotle can be read as proposing that attending lectures on ethics may help a well-habituated possessor of *synesis* to acquire *phronesis*. Since *phronesis* is, however, a virtue of practical and not only theoretical knowledge, I pointed out that experience is also needed, as well as listening lectures on ethics. It is possible that experience and theory could work in a mutually reinforcing way for a person in the process of acquiring *phronesis*. Once a person has been taught that he should act well not only to avoid shame, but also to realise the human good, *eudaimonia*, and then experience that acting well indeed improves his life, his motivation to act well shall increase. This virtuous circle of moral learning could gradually develop also his *phronesis*—that Aristotle defines in *EN* 6.5 as excellence in deliberation—for increasing moral knowledge and growing experience in using this knowledge should enable one to deliberate more and more carefully.

We came to see how *phronesis* might be acquired, but the question that we were left with was why it even has to be acquired. A person becomes morally virtuous if and only if he has *phronesis* in addition to *synesis* and a finely-habituated character, but what exactly does *phronesis* add to this combination apart from enabling him to understand why certain actions are good? Evidently, *phronesis* should also bring some improvement to the person’s acting, or otherwise, if it brought about only epistemic benefits, it would not be necessary for moral, or, action-related virtue. I dedicated Chapter 4 to studying the moral benefits of having *phronesis*. My suggestion was that only *phronesis* could make a person invulnerable to any form of

akrasia, and that this is why it is necessary for moral virtue. For it appeared to me that Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia* in *EN* 7 could yield such a conclusion.

In *EN* 7, Aristotle clearly argues that an ability to identify good actions does not prevent a person from anticipating bad actions as pleasant. Provided that the person characteristically surrenders to his non-rational desire, and performs a bad action, he is akratic; if he resists the attractions of improper pleasures, he is enkratic. Aristotle does not, however, say that the enkratic could never act akratically—he only tends to resist his bad desires. I found in Aristotle no reason that even finely-habituated people, who do not desire bad pleasures, could not be vulnerable to *akrasia* with regard to anger, which is a passion different from non-rational desire. This *akrasia* is not caused by an uncontrollable desire for pleasure, but by tendency to not deliberate before acting, which allows one's anger to result excessively violent acting. Since we found in Chapter 3 that only a *phronimos* is an excellent deliberator, as he can not only identify good actions, but also understands why they are good, I argued that probably only *phronesis* could prevent *akrasia* with regard to anger.

The last lines of *EN* 7.3 gave primary textual basis for my argument. In those lines, Aristotle briefly concludes that akratic acting is impossible in the presence of 'proper knowledge' (*kyria episteme*). Most other interpreters, such as Broadie and Charles, have argued that this knowledge must refer to the akratic person's knowledge of true moral beliefs, such as that 'I should avoid sweet foods.' I made clear, however, that Aristotle would not probably have casually called mere true beliefs, which are particular and contingent, as *kyria episteme*—that is, universal and unchangeable by definition. Instead, I proposed that 'proper knowledge' might more likely refer to the moral understanding of a *phronimos*. The ultimate reason why any good action is good is that performing it realises *eudaimonia*. Since a *phronimos* understands this, and is conscious that excessive violence would harm his own *eudaimonia* in the end, he is not prone to acting inappropriately—even if he is angry.

The above interpretation of the moral importance of *phronesis* completed my reconstruction of Aristotle's theory of moral development. In the course of my thesis, we saw that in order to become virtuous, we need the rational aspect of our soul to be able identify good actions—for which it needs the ability Aristotle calls *synesis*. This

ability, that most people can acquire by nature, explains why we are responsible for our actions despite the fact that they mostly derive from our characters, for it enables us to independently choose how to habituate the non-rational aspects of our souls. Even the fine habituation of the non-rational aspect is, however, only the first step towards virtue. It does not yet guarantee a morally virtuous character, since being virtuous is not only a firm motivation to perform the actions that *synesis* identifies as good. We also need excellence in practical deliberation, *phronesis*, to avoid virtuous motivation occasionally turning into impetuous and eventually harmful actions. This excellence, the second and last step, comes from moral experience and education of the rational aspect of soul, from the understanding of why identifiably good actions are good. *Phronesis* and full moral virtue may now seem to be an end that is hardly possible for anyone to achieve. The difficulty of becoming morally virtuous, and the rarity of virtue, makes, however, virtue admirable as the end of moral development.

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