Aristotle on the Preparatory Role of Habits in Education:
Virtue, Choice and the Love of the Noble

by

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Abstract

Aristotle claims that habituation is a necessary first step in moral education. In this thesis we ask why he says this and what this statement means. We find that good habits are a special class of motivations which prepare for the acquisition and exercise of virtue. We define good habits as the non-rational love of what is noble (τὸ καλόν): the desire to take pride in what is expansive and difficult. We suggest that this desire is at the root of all the reasoning and motivation involved in moral virtue. The rational wish for happiness as the ultimate good, the prudent choice of individual excellent actions, and the obedience of non-rational desires and feelings to this rational choice all develop and function on the basis of non-rational noble motivations. This is why habituation, which cultivates the love of the noble, is a first and necessary step in moral education.

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Last but not least I am indebted to the companionship of my wife Kat. She has suffered the unreasonable pangs of my intellectual conscience hardly less than I and has taught me a Stoicism as genuine as that of any ancient text.

I think I finally understand, perhaps too late, a fact that so many of my teachers and peers have tried to impress upon me: an M.A thesis is more of an exercise than an *oeuvre*. I intend to learn from the many errors of presentation, style and thinking it still contains.

Note on Citations

In the footnotes I employ abbreviations for the major works of Aristotle I refer to as follows:

EN = *Nicomachean Ethics*

EE = *Eudemian Ethics*

MM = *Magna Moralia*

Pol. = *Politics*

Meta. = *Metaphysics*

DA = *De Anima*

Rhe. = *Rhetoric*

In footnotes I refer to Aristotle by treatise name, book number (Roman numerals), chapter number (Arabic numerals), and approximate line number by intervals of five. Thus a reference to *Nicomachean Ethics*, book one, chapter 1, line 1094a7 would appear as: *EN* I.1.1097a5.

Unless otherwise noted I refer to Ross' translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the Revised Oxford Translation. For other Aristotelian texts I also use the Revised Oxford Translations. The Greek editions I have used are listed in the bibliography. Occasionally I have modified translations but have only noted this where it seemed philosophically important.

When referring to works of commentary published after 1900 I use the author's name, the date of original publication (given in brackets in the bibliographical citation where relevant) and page number. The sole exceptions are initial references to a work and the occasional inclusion of an essay or chapter title or number from a longer collected work, especially in the case of McDowell, Nussbaum and Moss. Full citations are found in the Bibliography.

Occasionally I refer to Terence Irwin's 1999 translation and commentary of *Nicomachean Ethics*. In these cases I refer by page number and, when a specific comment is at issue, to the section numbers he introduced into the text, also giving the line number he is commenting on. I use a similar procedure when I refer to Thomas Aquinas' commentary, which I refer to by lecture number (Roman numerals) and paragraph number (Arabic numerals).

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Introduction

Section 1: What do Habits Contribute to Excellence of Character?

It is well known and has attracted much attention that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* reserves an important place for the cultivation of habits in an education in virtue or excellence (ἀρετή). Book II of this work begins with the unqualified assertion that “excellence of character prevails from habits”, and is dedicated to explaining this and related theses.¹ One of its chief conclusions is that any particular excellence of character is acquired by repeatedly doing the actions and suffering the feelings that are typical of a person with that excellence, so that “it makes no small difference whether we are habituated in one or another way right from youth”.² In short, one becomes just by doing just acts and temperate by doing temperate acts,³ with the consequence that “knowledge has little or no force for the [possession of the] excellences, but the other [conditions] have not a little but all the power, namely those [dispositions] which prevail from often doing just and temperate acts.”⁴

To modern ears Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has had a deterministic and behaviorist resonance which still resides in the background of some contemporary scholarship.⁵ Habituation, it has appeared, is a mechanical process of conditioning the soul to do the acts it is used to. This seems especially the case when we note superficially that habits are formed by means of pleasures and pains and condition what we take pleasure and pain in.⁶ We imagine that human children are habituated in roughly the way that domesticated animals

¹ EN II.1.1103a15. ἡ ἠθικὴ ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται.

² EN II.1.1103b5.

³ EN II.4.1105b5-10.

⁴ EN II.4.1105b1.

⁵ This can be detected in Williams (1985, pp. 40-44) and in Irwin's more detailed studies, discussed below.

⁶ EN II.3.

are trained to respond to selected stimuli. We might even imagine that virtue of character is nothing more than a kind of trained and predictable response to specific stimuli. Just as a well-trained dog responds to a command with a specific behavior, so a well-habituated human being responds to a specific event or opportunity with a pre-defined action.

At least the second of these ideas (that excellence is a behaviorist habit) is commonly and rightly rejected by interpreters. It is well recognized that for Aristotle, full excellence of character involves a form of knowledge - *φρόνησις*, variously translated as ‘prudence’ or ‘practical wisdom’. This is recognized as early as in the passages from Book II.4 on habit cited above - not only the doing of temperate and just actions makes a just man, but the doing of them “in the way that” (*οὕτω ὡς*) just and temperate men do them.⁷ Similar later formulations specify that this “in the way that” refers to the possession of prudence. Thus we are told that only actions done in accordance with (*κατά*) prudence or right reason, and even *with* (*μετά*) prudence or right reason, are excellent, and only the corresponding dispositions are excellences.⁸ Aristotle is keen to note that this is a qualified defense of Socrates’ thesis that excellence is knowledge.

The nature of prudence has been the subject of much recent interpretation and is discussed by Aristotle in Book VI. One of its elements deserves being highlighted here. Aristotle several times claims that it is prudence which determines “what is intermediate” (*ὁ μέσος*).⁹ And by this he means it determines what is excellent in action: every excellent action occupies some sort of middle place between extremes. As we will have the opportunity to note in much more detail, this means that no pre-defined, mechanically habituated response to a

⁷ *EN* II.4.1105b5.

⁸ *EN* VI.13.1144b25ff.

⁹ *EN* II.6.1107a1, VI.1.1138b15-30.

specific stimulus can constitute an excellence. It is not always courageous to fight when faced with a danger, or even a danger one could conquer; it is not always generous to give, even when one has enough money. This appears to be what Aristotle had in mind as the ground for the necessity of prudence for excellence.¹⁰ A large part of what it means to say that excellence implies *prudence* is that excellence must be or involve an intelligent and nuanced response to the specific features of the context of action. For this reason, excellence involves the intellectual abilities associated with prudence, such as skill in deliberating, good judgement and understanding the judgements of others.¹¹

The fact that excellence of character seems to demand such intellectual acuity has seemed to some to be in tension with the claim that it is formed by habituation.¹² How can such an apparently mechanical process as habituation produce an excellence inflected by such rational judgements? Aristotle gestures towards an answer several times. We are told at the very outset that “anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and about the whole subject of political science must have been brought up nobly in habits (δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἡχθαι καλῶς)”, for by this means he secures the principles (ἀρχαί) of this science.¹³ At the very end of the text, in the transition to the *Politics*, we find comparable hints. Arguments and persuasion about excellence can only be effective on a soul that has already been cultivated “by habits for noble rejoicing and hating”,¹⁴ a soul which lives “for what is noble” because of its “formation by habits”.¹⁵ When we remember Aristotle’s comment that habits (ἔθου) produce excellence of character (ἀρετὴ ἠθικὴ) we can immediately connect these

¹⁰ *EN* VI.13.1144b1-10. We discuss this passage in more detail in Chapter III, Section 1.

¹¹ *EN* VI.9-11.

¹² This tension is evidenced in Irwin, discussed below. It is also evident in MacIntyre’s similar way of presenting the harmony of habit and prudence (1984, pp.149, 154, 161-162).

¹³ *EN* I.4.1095b1-5.

¹⁴ *EN* X.9.1179b25.

¹⁵ *EN* X.9.1180a5.

passages to many equivalent claims about a person's disposition of character. We are told that it is mature character which ensures that knowledge about excellence will be beneficial,¹⁶ that it is the love of the noble and the sense of shame, "seized by the character", which grounds the power of argument about excellence,¹⁷ and that excellences like temperance "preserve the principles of things to be done".¹⁸

These passages apparently suggest a somewhat more intellectual account of the role of habituation: good habits provide some sort of awareness of principle(s) of good action, particularly in the love of 'what is noble' (τὸ καλόν) which makes it possible for a person to be "possessed by excellence".¹⁹ This seems to be a more promising suggestion for understanding how habits could help produce excellences of character which involve nuanced judgements and not strictly fixed responses to stimuli. But it raises more questions than it answers. What specifically is this habitual awareness of principles of goodness? How is it related to the apparently more behaviorist understanding of habits which seemed to be sketched in Book II? How is it related to the rational knowledge about excellence and rational exercise of excellence Aristotle says it prepares for? In other words, what is distinctive about it as a grade of awareness and of motivation? How does this distinctiveness explain its contribution to excellence of character? These are the questions we want to formulate and answer in this thesis. We will do well to situate our way of doing so relative to a few existing approaches.

¹⁶ *EN* I.3.1095a5.

¹⁷ *EN* X.9.1179b5-15. Also 1179b25-30.

¹⁸ *EN* VI.5.1140b10-15. Many other passages could be cited and are cited in the remainder of the thesis.

¹⁹ *EN* X.9.1179b5.

Section 2: Some Existing Approaches to the Problem; Our Basic Approach Defined

We have therefore recognized an ambiguity in the concept of habituation which corresponds to a difficulty in understanding how habits produce that excellence which is guided by prudence. On the one hand we have an apparently behaviorist account of habituation as a process of getting the soul to respond to regular stimuli with regular reactions of pleasure, pain, motivation and affection. We can readily understand how this is ‘habit’, but have difficulty seeing what it could contribute to excellence guided by prudence. On the other hand we see Aristotle gesturing to a habituation process which provides some awareness of the principles guiding prudence. This seems more promising for understanding a contribution to rational moral excellence, but we begin to fail to see what is distinctively ‘habitual’ about this awareness of principles - this demands an alteration in our concept of habit.

One approach, exemplified by Terence Irwin, is to explain this tension as an indecision on Aristotle’s part. Irwin claims that Aristotle wavers between two concepts of excellence and of habit.²⁰ He claims that the definition of excellence as requiring prudence has priority and involves the claim that rational thought alone identifies the ends of action and makes true excellence possible. He says that therefore Aristotle should have been more careful to emphasize that habits in the sub-rational sense do not produce excellence so much as a behaviorist conditioning prior to true excellence.²¹ He should have either left the production of full excellence to rational instruction in prudence, or emphasized another sense of habit, as more of a habit of *thinking* about excellence and happiness.²² These amount to nearly the same

²⁰ Irwin, 1975, especially 576-578. He makes similar claims in his commentary (1999, pg. 254, #2, on *EN* VI.13.1144b10-15). In his 1980 article he makes similar claims, with a focus on the concepts of freedom and responsibility.

²¹ Irwin evokes this idea in calling this habitual excellence the ‘raw material’ of excellence (1975, 576).

²² Thomas Aquinas sometimes shows a similar tendency insofar as he refers to prudence itself as a habit (see for example X.1267, commentary on *EN* VI.1144a1-5).

thing: Irwin's point is that only thinking about happiness, its chief components and the ways to achieve it can produce true, rational, prudential excellence. The concept of habit must either be intellectualized or relegated to a mechanical consistency of the sub-rational motivations and affections with the independent judgements of prudence.

In Chapter I, Section 1b we articulate something like Irwin's view on the basis of texts from the *Politics* before noting its faults. We can note here in summary that Irwin himself acknowledges that his interpretation requires us to overlook or accept revisions to several clear tendencies in the text. Aristotle often speaks of a sense of moral excellence that is irrational, as well as noting that moral excellence in the full sense depends on prudence. He often assigns the grasp of ends of action to this irrational excellence, explicitly stating that rational deliberation assumes these ends, not sets them. Although we can recognize that there is such a thing as having a habit *of thinking*, Aristotle himself assigns the grasp of principles to this non-rational excellence which 'habituation' produces. Irwin's proposal that there must be two senses of habit because habit cannot grasp principles stems from the assumption that non-rational habits are mechanistic, behaviorist forces and that only thought can grasp principles. It is doubtful that Aristotle shares this assumption, since he appears unequivocally to state that habit produces non-rational excellences which *are* a grasp of principles. We can note for now that we are seeking an interpretation that does not revise Aristotle's statements and deny the existence of the faculty, either by intellectualizing it or by denying its guiding contribution to prudential excellence.

On first glance, the somewhat more recent interpretations of John McDowell, Martha Nussbaum, and Deborah Achtenberg seem more promising. These authors speak relatively

little about habituation but have done very much work on prudence.²³ McDowell and Nussbaum stress that prudence is not equivalent with general philosophical knowledge about happiness and excellence. It is rather a situational kind of skill and awareness, very close to perception in that it must be highly conversant with particular actions and their circumstances. It is in addition inseparable from desires and feelings, which must be universally interpreted as involving or even being equivalent with rational, pseudo-perceptual recognitions of goods. Achtenberg accepts this focus on prudence as a quasi-perceptual, emotionally and motivationally embedded awareness of particulars, but thinks that McDowell and Nussbaum have not sufficiently acknowledged the universal element in this awareness.²⁴ She argues convincingly that prudence relies on awareness of the particular *manifestations* of universal, scientifically defined concepts of good while preserving much of Nussbaum and McDowell's approach. We review and expand her key arguments in Chapter II.

By widening somewhat the scope of what we see as 'rational' in prudence, these authors might seem to offer us resources for conceiving of the non-rational habits which help produce prudential excellences. Nussbaum can seem to be on this very track when she speaks of all desires as 'reaching out' for goods, even those that are less rational than fully developed deliberation.²⁵ Achtenberg even more explicitly and thoroughly interprets habituation as a 'perception' of the principle of value which her book defines.²⁶ When we look more closely, however, we suspect that these approaches require essentially the same revisions as Irwin's. These authors all seem to agree in viewing full, prudentially guided excellence as an essentially rational, intellectual faculty. McDowell argues explicitly for Aristotle's version of the Socratic

²³ Nussbaum 1986, Chapter 10. McDowell, 'Virtue and Reason', 1998. Achtenberg 2002.

²⁴ 2012, pp. 13-18.

²⁵ 1986, chapter 9, pp. 282-289.

²⁶ 2002, pp.128-142.

thesis that virtue is knowledge, and makes a point of requiring that this knowledge include fundamental reflection on values.²⁷ Nussbaum seems to identify excellence with the ability to deliberate well, and gives deliberation the same all-encompassing power to determine the ends of action as do Irwin and McDowell.²⁸ Achtenberg sees ‘cognitivism’ about value, which she does not distinguish clearly from ‘rationalism’ or ‘intellectualism’, as a characteristic merit of Aristotle’s thinking about excellence,²⁹ and aligns habits with *voûς*, unmediated but rational ‘insight’ into principles.³⁰ Each of these authors reject the mechanical or behaviorist understanding of habits, but still intellectualize habits to the extent that they see prudence’s grasp of the principles of action as entirely rational.

A recent exception to this intellectualizing trend is found in Jessica Moss’ 2012 book *Aristotle on the Apparent Good*.³¹ Moss accepts that full excellence, the ability to make and carry out good decisions about things of general value to human beings, requires prudence. But she refuses to revise Aristotle’s statements about habit and habitual excellence in light of this fact. She argues that we must accept the apparent meaning of these statements: there is a non-rational moral excellence, the product of habituation, which involves non-rational awareness of value and in particular the principles of value - the ends of life. She argues that this mode of awareness is perceptual and imaginative as opposed to rational but is still a genuine cognition of value. Essentially it is a desire to take a specific form of perceptual

²⁷ See especially ‘Virtue and Reason’, 1998, pp. 50-57.

²⁸ For example: 1986, pp. 284-285.

²⁹ 2002, pp. 1-2. We think that Aristotle is a ‘cognitivist’ in that he thinks ethical evaluations identify realities. But he is no rationalist, because the primary and initial ‘cognitions’ of value are in non-rational ‘perceptions’. For this concept see Jessica Moss’ idea of ‘Practical Empiricism’ (2012, pp. 234-235), discussed below.

³⁰ 2002, pp. 133-142.

³¹ See especially chapters 7 and 8, pp. 153-235. For Moss’ own somewhat more comprehensive survey of literature which is nonetheless roughly along the lines of our own sketch, see pp. 157-163. As she notes on pg. 209, among other places, Myles Burnyeat’s 1980 paper is an important but less well-developed precedent. Sarah Broadie (pp. 49-50, 380-384) also recognizes distinct functions for character and for deliberation. But in practice her analysis does not seem to distinguish sufficiently between the grasp of general ends and deliberation about how to realize them.

pleasure (pride) in objects intrinsically capable of occasioning that pleasure (excellent actions, the ‘noble’ or ‘fine’). She argues further that these ‘habits’ are the ground of all subsequent rational cognition of goods, including both the rational wish for happiness and deliberation about how to act. Non-rational cognition of the principles of excellence and happiness penetrates and makes possible every exercise of prudence, and this is the key to understanding the preparatory contribution of habits.

Moss’ efforts make an enormous and essential step towards answering our question, and we accept and repeat many of her basic arguments throughout this thesis, especially those more uniquely focused on Aristotelian cognitive psychology and its consequences for the cognitive status of habits. Where we differ from Moss is mostly in our focus on the habituation process and its contribution to moral excellence generally, and our more detailed way of characterizing ‘what is noble’. Moss’ main subject is Aristotelian φαντασία as a non-rational way of being aware of value. Her interest in habituation stems mostly from proving that Aristotle is what she calls a ‘practical empiricist’ for whom all rational thought about the good derives its content from evaluative perception and imagination of the good. Our own interest is mainly in the habituation process and its contribution to moral education generally and the active exercise of moral excellence especially. As we will indicate, we approach this question with a focus on psychology, which makes Moss’ work useful throughout. But our emphasis is different, and we spend more time on the parts, order and methods of education, on the *generation* of habits, and on the role of habits in guiding the active exercise of deliberating, choosing, and carrying out the resolutions of choice.

Our second difference from Moss lies in the way we characterize the love of τὸ καλόν, which we both eventually identify with habitual excellence. This difference has two aspects.

We agree with Moss' account of good habits as a desire to take pride in the perception of what is intrinsically valuable. But Moss is not committed to any specific account of what is noble, whereas we accept a revised version of Achtenberg's metaphysical understanding of happiness. We therefore seek to interpret noble habits' love of the end in terms of this general metaphysics of ends. Secondly, Moss does not describe 'pride', or its inverse, 'shame', in any detail. She is focused on the cognitive and psychological status of the desire to take pride in the noble. We, however, want a more concrete understanding of this pre-rational pride. Together, these differences from Moss' approach to nobility amount to a push for a more concrete and adequate understanding of the objective characteristic of 'nobility' and the affective character of the 'pride' that perceives it. It is this more concretely and adequately conceived noble pride whose generation by habituation and contribution to an education in excellence and its exercise that we want to trace.

Section 3: Method and Plan of the Work

Before beginning our argument we will briefly indicate the main problems, methods and conclusions of each chapter. Chapter I establishes the basic framework and questions of the thesis. Our starting point in Section 1 is some of Aristotle's most general and schematic comments on the goal, parts and order of moral education, in *Politics* VII.13-15. Our goal here is to situate habituation in a comprehensive program of the education of the soul in moral excellence. This is an important starting point because it is all too common to treat habits as a generic reality without specifying which capacity of the soul they perfect. This is anathema to our approach, which seeks to do justice to the claim that habits are non-rational and to identify them with a specific mode of cognition.

Our key findings here are that for Aristotle, habituation is the first stage of education

and prepares for the second, which he calls instruction. These stages correspond to and perfect two distinct and complementary soul parts or capacities. Habituation perfects the irrational, ‘desiring’ soul which ‘shares in’ reason, and instruction the rational soul concerned with practice. We find quite naturally that the perfection of the rational soul is prudence, and we tentatively characterize the perfection of the irrational soul as obedience to prudence. This allows us to tentatively interpret the ‘preparation’ of habituation as the cultivation of mechanical tendencies to obey heteronomous commands of excellent actions. This is a necessary precondition for obeying one’s own prudent commands but plays no role in acquiring or exercising the rational ability to actually make them.

In Section 2 we note that the psychology which splits the rational and irrational souls into rationally commanding and passively or mechanically obeying and desiring functions, respectively, is imprecise and does not reflect Aristotle’s settled view. Every capacity and perfection of soul is an active form of discriminatory desire implying a kind of cognition, or awareness of objects. The distinction between rational and irrational is between desires formed by thought on the one hand and perception or imagination on the other. The consequences for how to conceive of the ‘preparatory’ contribution of habituation to excellence are significant. Habits cannot be defined merely as listening to or obeying reason. They must imply an active and cognitive desire which in turn makes ‘listening’ and ‘obeying’ possible.

This impression is deepened when we introduce Aristotle’s most psychologically precise analyses of prudent choice, in Section 2b.³² These unambiguously define prudent choice as a faculty aggregated from two simpler faculties. On the one hand we find the irrational, narrow sense of moral excellence produced by habits. These are responsible for the

³² We use texts from the three major ethical works and *De Anima*.

correct ‘intention’ of the end of life, which we eventually align with the wish for happiness (Chapter III, Section 1). On the other hand we have the specifically rational faculty of skill in deliberating. This is an ability to think well about and discover how to attain these pre-determined ends. Aristotle’s most profound analyses of choice therefore describe non-rational habitual excellence not as a merely passive faculty of affection and obedience to reason, but as the active, correct intention of goals, an intention that is indispensable for prudence itself. The question of obedience to commands, though important and belonging to habituation, is secondary and derivative (as we confirm in Chapter III, Sections 1 and 3).

This guiding analysis of choice at the same time provides us with an interpretive method which we follow in the remainder of the thesis. The basic question is how habituation prepares for the development and exercise of full moral excellence. The latter we have by this point defined as the faculty of prudent choice and obedience to that choice. Prudent choice is therefore the most central focal point for an understanding of full moral excellence. Since we have found that the principal work of habituation is to form the excellent intentions of the end which guide deliberation’s efforts to form prudent choices, our basic goal is to isolate this function of habit in both the genesis and the operation of prudent choice. A detailed psychology of the faculties involved in prudent choice and their perfect functioning is an important interpretive clue to this end. If we have a solid idea of how mature prudent choice and each of its parts ‘works’, we thereby understand the contribution habits (one of these ‘parts’) make to this mature goal. On this basis we can infer an idea of how habituation and instruction work to develop this mature faculty. By understanding the mature functioning of habits and of deliberation, and especially the guidance of deliberation by habits, we can understand the development of habitual intention and skill in deliberating, and skill in deliberating on the basis

of habitual intention. Although we do discuss the educational process, our focus is therefore more on its principles and goals, and we produce in the end what I would call an ‘answer in principle’ to the question of what habituation contributes to prudent choice and excellence generally. Aristotle does not, after all, have a detailed theory of how rational soul-faculties are generated and educated on the basis of the irrational ones such as we might find in contemporary developmental theories.

In our effort to isolate the contribution of habits to mature prudent choice, we begin with the contribution of deliberation in Chapter II. This is because understanding the rational aspect of prudent choice is easier and enjoys more textually detailed support than understanding the irrational habits supporting it. Aristotle defines the object of choice as coextensive with the object of deliberation and both can be well described as ‘what we might pursue because we think it good’.³³ Deliberate thought is more akin to philosophical ethics than habitual intentions are, making it easier for us to understand by philosophical arguments. Even though Aristotle clearly restricts deliberation to thinking about *how to achieve* happiness, it seems to at least involve an awareness of this goal, by which it measures or evaluates individual actions. Discussing deliberation first therefore gives us an opportunity to discuss both the general principles of ethics and to define fairly precisely the type of thinking by which these principles are ‘applied’ to individual situations in deliberate choices. Our discussion of habits, conversely, will have to infer an account of how these principles are cognized non-rationally from Aristotle’s general statement that such habitual cognition exists and guides deliberation. It is useful to have an idea of how choice is structured rationally before moving to the irrational side of its structure. Even though our account of deliberation will be incomplete

³³ This is a summary of *EN* III.3.

until complemented by an account of habits, we therefore begin with deliberation.

The main argument of Chapter II is that deliberation is inquiry into how best to attain happiness in a specific situation. When deliberation for the sake of happiness is correct, it results in prudent choice, the choice of that available course of action which best expresses happiness. Education in deliberation is the transmission of this largely *ad hoc* rational skill in identifying the most ‘happy’ or ‘excellent’ action. After the general statement that deliberation seeks what contributes to ends (Section 1), the argument proceeds in three main stages. First (Sections 2-3) we explain what it means for the end, ‘happiness’, to be instantiated in human beings, in their distinctive activities, and in their particular actions.³⁴ This is an argument about the metaphysical principles of ethics and of deliberation. We defend a modified version of Deborah Achtenberg’s view that ‘good’, ‘excellent’ and ‘happy’ always refer to the flourishing of a substance within defining limits, but that their diverse uses are equivocal and related to one another by analogy to this idea of substantial flourishing. Thus in the human moral realm, every excellent action helps human substances flourish in different ways (in battle, financially, in diet and health, etc.), and each action is ‘intermediate’ in that it realizes this flourishing in the way specific to that realm and the circumstances at hand. We accept this interpretation and add that these terms also apply with degrees of truth to the different human and divine activities which instantiate them in differing degrees. Human political activity (and its different manifestations in the several excellences), contemplation, and the divine thought all manifest happiness in different ways and degrees, on an ascending hierarchical scale.

A second phase of the argument of Chapter II (Section 4) is to sketch an idea of the way that deliberate choice of the best available action is made possible and explained by this

³⁴ We rely on limited texts from the *Metaphysics*, but especially *EN* X.6-8 on happiness, I.6 criticizing the Idea of Good, and parts of *EN* II on the intermediate.

metaphysics of value. Our core idea is that because Aristotle recognizes a hierarchy of ends, the actions available in a situation can be ordered based on what degree of value they have.³⁵ This is what deliberation does: it discovers what action has the most excellence and contributes most to the attainment of happiness. We explain this rationally, in terms of the effort to identify the minor premise of the practical syllogism and in terms of rational justifications of choices as realizing the most value possible. But we also indicate (building on the work of Moss and Achtenberg) that there is a non-rational, imaginative element to deliberation, which imagines each action ‘in the light of’ happiness until one option is identified as best.³⁶ The question of how precisely this works is deferred until Chapter III, Section 3.

The final step of Chapter II (Section 5) is to respond to an objection and at the same time clarify the specific nature of deliberative thought and infer to the nature of instruction in deliberation. We argue that the metaphysical explanation of the principles of deliberation does not mean that deliberation is a form of metaphysics or any other science and take this objection as an opportunity to introduce and develop Achtenberg’s ideas about the relationship of ethics to metaphysics. We argue that deliberation (in its rational and irrational grades), philosophical ethics, and the higher sciences are three different grades of cognition (four if we count the two grades of deliberation) which grasp the same principles in different and ascending degrees of precision, clarity and universality. This helps us understand that deliberation is an *ad hoc*, experiential form of thinking about how to act transmitted by a general cultural education not at all distinct from everyday living, rather than by courses in philosophy.³⁷

³⁵ We take as our core text in 4b the one from *EN* III.1 on ‘mixed’ voluntary actions, which we use to interpret several ‘choices’ typifying major classes of goods.

³⁶ This part, in Section 4a, relies on passages from *De Anima* and the guidance of Moss.

³⁷ We rely on scattered passages from *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima* that seem to speak to this issue of grades of knowledge.

In Chapter III we finally explore the other side of the Aristotelian ‘equation’ defining choice: the non-rational ‘intention’ of happiness as excellence by habitual moral excellence. Our questions about this intention will be defined by the work done in Chapters I and II. What is this non-rational ‘right intention’? How is it generated by habituation? How does it non-rationally grasp something like the principle(s) defining happiness? How does it guide skill in deliberation to form prudent choice? How does it prepare for obedience to prudent choice? In short how does it prepare for the exercise of moral excellence as a whole? What is our answer in principle to the question of how habitual education guides the development of this moral excellence and its other chief element - deliberation?

A word on the method of Chapter III. As we have noted, Aristotle does not provide a very detailed theory of habits or habituation. Much of what we can say about the topic has to be inferred creatively by holding as strictly as we can to the logic of what he does say: that habitual excellence is an irrational faculty, that irrational faculties operate by perception and imagination, that habitual excellence sets the end(s) by which deliberation evaluates particular actions, that this end is happiness as excellence, and other such points which we note as we progress. We cannot and do not claim to provide more than a plausible interpretation coherent with and supported by what is explicitly stated. Additionally, our final conclusions suffer from a need for verification. They essentially have the status of general hypotheses which seem to us legitimate based on the logic of Aristotle’s statements about habituation and its role in education, but that would have to be confirmed by work on many aspects of his philosophy. With this note on method registered, we can sketch the major arguments and conclusions of Chapter III and the thesis as a whole.

In Section 1 we argue that habits are primarily tendencies of motivation (desire and

aversion occasioned by perceptions and imaginations) and only derivatively tendencies of feeling and action. We argue (with Jessica Moss) that their function of ‘intending happiness’ is very similar to that of ‘wish’ (βούλησις), and that even if wish is ‘rational’, as many argue and seems plausible, the function Aristotle assigns to non-rational excellence indicates that ‘wish’, like other forms of thought, has a non-rational basis or mirror image. We hypothesize that there must be some way in which the general end of happiness and its intermediate fulfillment is ‘wished for’ or ‘intended’ non-rationally, as the ground of its ‘rational’ intention.³⁸

Section 2 is our main contribution to the study of this habitually excellent wish. We accept Jessica Moss’ argument that it is essentially a desire to take pride in the perception of (one’s own) excellence and happiness, or ‘nobility’, and work towards a more objectively and subjectively specific understanding of this non-rational, prideful awareness. We do so by extensively interpreting some of Aristotle’s comments about habituation in *Nicomachean Ethics* II. We find that habituation is essentially a process of overcoming ‘base’ (φᾶλος) motives in favor of ‘noble’ motives. This means overcoming the tendency to motivate ourselves by the ‘private’ pleasures and pains of our own individual material body, a tendency that comes naturally, easily and therefore cheaply and which indicates a small or narrow soul. By contrast, habituation seeks to instill in us and encourage a firm tendency to be motivated by what is expansive and difficult, ‘courageous’ and ‘generous’ in a sense not limited to any specific context of excellence but encompassing them all. It does so by staking our sense of self-esteem or pride on our ability to overcome base motivations for the sake of noble ones. The educators (initially fathers and later elder peers) command that noble actions be done, and this is interpreted as a condition of their love by the ‘student’ who learns to value himself in

³⁸ We review some aspects of Chapter I.1b’s analysis of choice, adding key passages on wish from *EN* III.4-5 and VI.13, especially.

the eyes of these men. The result of a successful habitual education is a youth who wants above all else to take pride in his own accomplishment of broadly heroic, courageous, generous, ‘noble’ deeds, and who views his life, the life of the state, and every action class of action, as opportunities to exercise this pride.

In Section 3 we suggest that this pre-rational love of ‘what is noble’ grounds the development and exercise of prudence and obedience to prudence, following Aristotle’s apparent claims to this effect in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9. Our basic suggestion is that each general and particular manifestation of happiness and excellence is something that a youth who loves what is noble can and would recognize as a proper object of his noble pride. The initial, irrational desire to take pride in what is generous and courageous gives the youth an ability to learn to recognize what is noble in the general categories of life-activity and in specific actions and situations, and also ensures that whatever he recognizes as noble he will take up immediately as his own. The inverse holds for shame in what is base: he recognizes and rejects it in its every manifestation. We surmise that this is what Aristotle meant by saying that only a “true lover of the noble” could be “possessed by excellence”.³⁹ We see this as a plausible hypothesis on the grounds that it makes sense of Aristotle’s comments on education, but acknowledge that it has not been demonstrated fully. We end the section and the chapter by making some speculative suggestions of how this basic motif of irrationally recognizing and taking up what is noble as one’s own can be used to explain the derivation of complex rational wishes from the love of the noble, the work of this love in guiding deliberation and choice, and the way it helps ensure obedience to the prudent choices it guides.

³⁹ *EN* X.9.1179b5.

Chapter I: The goal, parts, and order of moral education

Aristotle's most comprehensive comments on moral education are to be found in the context of the *Politics* VII-VIII theory of the ideal state. There he defines the purpose of education as the cultivation of moral excellence and divides it into two parts, habituation and instruction. These each perfect the motivational and rational functions of the soul, respectively, which harmonize to form perfect moral excellence. Moreover, these parts correspond to *stages*: habituation comes first, cultivating the part of the soul that develops first and preparing the way for instruction, which cultivates the rational functions which develop later. This is the most comprehensive sketch of the goal, parts, and order of moral education in Aristotle's writings, and it is the task of the present chapter to present it. To do so, however, we cannot rely solely on the *Politics* without confusion and misunderstanding. All the elements of its sketch of the structure of moral education are defined more precisely elsewhere, in *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima*. We will therefore unfold our account in stages, orienting ourselves at each point by the *Politics*, and interpreting its guiding hints by material from these other works.

In Section 1, we give a preliminary interpretation of the structure of education. The goal of education is excellence of character, which the *Politics* and *Ethics* agree loosely in analyzing as a harmony of habit and reason. Both texts also task the two parts of education - habituation and instruction - with the perfection of these respective soul functions. It therefore becomes crucial to understand the functions of habit and reason in isolation and in harmony. In the *Politics* and the parts of the *Ethics* that rely on popular psychology, these faculties and their perfections are defined dualistically as 'desire' and 'reason', 'obedience' and 'command', and their harmony is defined precisely as the dutiful obedience of desire to true commands.

Education correspondingly appears as a twofold process beginning with habituation, which instills in the youth irrational habits of obedience which prepare for the time when he is capable of taking rational command of himself and being instructed in that command.

In Section 2 we note that the dualistic psychology that underlies this concept of education is imprecise and inadequate. ‘Desire’ and ‘Reason’ are not faculties in Aristotle’s psychology, but rather belong to all the several faculties in different ways. While there is a certain place for language of command and obedience in the account of education and of excellence, the parts of excellence (prudent choice and moral excellence in the narrow sense) must be understood as each being a form of desire with its own cognitive shape, and as ‘commanding and ‘obeying’ only by mutual determination. The same goes for the education processes which perfect these faculties. The remainder of the thesis will focus on giving an account of these more complex faculties and their mutual determinations in prudent choice and action in accordance with that choice. The present chapter sets this work on track by giving a preliminary analysis of prudent choice, the ruling part of excellence, which will guide an account of the work of habituation and instruction. Prudent choice is the harmony of right habitual intention with skill in rational deliberation. Habituation appears to perfect the ‘intentions’ of the soul, so that they aim at the right objects, and instruction appears to transmit skill in discovering how to achieve these objectives.

Section 1: Preliminary Interpretation

A) The Goal and Parts of Education

Books VII and VIII of the *Politics* contain what survives of Aristotle's theory of the ideal state. Like Plato's *Republic*, they have as their core a theory of education (παιδεία). Aristotle's state is one organized on the principle of the excellence and happiness of its citizens, with this as its goal.⁴⁰ In these same passages, education is introduced from the beginning as the principal means of making the citizens excellent and happy.⁴¹ Now as we know from *Nicomachean Ethics*, happiness comes in two varieties, the practical or political and the contemplative or philosophical.⁴² In each case it is defined by reference to excellence, namely as a certain type of activity performed in accordance with the excellence of a certain form of reason.⁴³ The proximate goal of education is therefore excellence more than happiness, for it is on the basis of excellence that happiness is performed. We can also limit our discussion to *moral* excellence, for even though the *Politics* tends to speak of excellence and happiness generically, the context of discussion typically shows a focus on their moral aspect.⁴⁴ When we speak of an education in excellence henceforth we therefore mean a moral education in excellence of character: the goal of 'education' is excellence of character (ἀρετὴ ἠθικὴ).⁴⁵

Now what is excellence of character, and how does education cultivate it? The *Politics* passages on the structure of education analyze its goal as a 'harmony' (συμφωνεῖν) of habit

⁴⁰ *Pol.* VII.13-15.

⁴¹ The topic is first introduced at *Pol.* VII.13.1332a35ff. The claim is repeated in the *Ethics*, especially *EN* II.1.1103b1-5 and X.9.

⁴² *EN* I.13.1103a5, X.6-8.

⁴³ *EN* I.7.1097b20-1098a15.

⁴⁴ This is clear throughout *Pol.* VII.13-15, and also at *Pol.* VII.1-3, where Aristotle takes particular pains to emphasize that excellence has a contemplative aspect, revealing the standard assumption that excellence and happiness are moral qualities.

⁴⁵ Aristotle elsewhere often conforms to this regular usage of the word παιδεία, in passages where the focus is explicitly moral: see for example, *EN* X.9, especially 1180b1, and throughout the *EN* II discussion of education by habituation, which occurs in the context of the initial treatment of moral excellence.

and reason, and divide education into two parts corresponding to each of the terms of this harmony.⁴⁶ In *Politics* VII.13 we read that “good and excellent men (ἀνὴρ) come into being (γίγνονται) on account of three things. These are nature, habit, reason.”⁴⁷ The reference to nature serves to identify the limits of education: by nature one must be born a man and possess certain basic qualities of body and soul.⁴⁸ Given these qualities in place, however, few more specific qualities are worth much by nature, for these will be changed and many are naturally ambiguous, capable of being turned for the worse or the better.⁴⁹ Whatever is not up to the bare gift of nature is within the influence and responsibility of education, which trains or masters those natures which are easy to master or train (εὐχέρωτοι).⁵⁰ An education in excellence forms for the better those natures with a predisposition to excellence.⁵¹

Aristotle names two ways in which human beings possess qualities otherwise than by nature, namely habit (ἔθος) and reason (λόγος).⁵² He accordingly recognizes two parts to the work of education: habituation (ἐθίζεσθαι) and instruction or teaching (μάθησις).⁵³ These parts of education apparently correspond to two ways in which the soul can be in truth or error - by possessing true or false judgements about what is better, and by possessing good or bad habits.⁵⁴ An education by habituation seeks to lead (ἀρχεῖν) the soul to good habits, and an

⁴⁶ *Pol.* VII.13.1332b5, 15.1334b5-10.

⁴⁷ *Pol.* VII.13.1332a35-40.

⁴⁸ *Pol.* VII.13.1332b5-10, 15.1334b5. This is apparently a reference backward to VII.7, which claimed that men who are to love freedom and their friends, and who shall become capable of ruling themselves and others must be by nature both spirited (ἔνθυμος) and intelligent (διανοήτικος). One can imagine that physical qualities such as strength could be called for as well.

⁴⁹ *Pol.* VII.1332b1.

⁵⁰ *Pol.* VII.13.1332b10.

⁵¹ In this claim Aristotle is in accord with Plato, who thought there was a ‘philosophical nature’ suited to virtue and wisdom (*Rep* 503b-e) and capable of ambiguous possibilities of good and evil (*Rep* 490a-497a). It is fitting that these comments introduce the part of Aristotle’s political work (*Pol.* VII.16-VIII) which most closely mirrors Plato’s concern with education in *Republic*.

⁵² *Pol.* VII.13.1332b1-5.

⁵³ *Pol.* VII.13.1332b10. The division is repeated at *EN* II.1.1103a10-15, X.9.1179b20; *MM* I.6.1186a1; *EE* II.2.1220a35-1220b1.

⁵⁴ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b10, 13.1332b5.

education by instruction seeks to propose (ὑποτιθεῖν) to it or persuade (πείθεσθαι) it about the good way to act.⁵⁵ Taken together, these two parts of education therefore produce the harmony which the entire process seeks.

It therefore becomes very important to understand the nature of this harmony and its two elements if we are to understand the Aristotelian theory of education. A passage from *Politics* VII.15 gives us a crucial starting point. “This much is clear in the first place,” it reads,

that as in other cases, generation is from a beginning, and that the end (τέλος) [reached] from some beginnings is relative to another end.⁵⁶ Now in us, reason and insight (λόγος καὶ νοῦς) are the end of nature, so that the generation and the care in preparation of habits (τὴν παρασκευάζειν μελέτην τῶν ἔθων) must be directed towards these. Further, just as the soul and body are two, so also we see that there are two parts (μέρη) of the soul, that which is without reason and that which has reason, and that the dispositions of these [parts] (τὰς ἕξεις τούτων) are [also] two in number: and these are desire (ὄρεξις) and insight (νοῦς). And just as the body is prior in generation to the soul, so also that which is without reason [is prior in generation] to that which has reason. This is manifest from the following: spirit (θῦμος) and wish (βούλησις) and appetite (ἐπιθυμία) are generated right from childhood, but calculation (λογισμός) and insight (νοῦς) are naturally generated later. For this reason, the care (ἐπιμέλειαν) of the body must come before the care of the soul, and then [must come] the care of that which desires. And yet still the care of that which desires must surely be for the sake of insight (νοῦ) and the care of the body for the sake of the soul.⁵⁷

This passage indicates in a compact and schematic way the nature of the harmony which education seeks to produce, as well as how the regimen of education must be ordered to achieve this τέλος. It refers the two parts of education - habituation and instruction - to two parts or capacities (μέρη, δυνάμει) of the soul, which they perfect into settled dispositions (ἕξεις), or in other words excellences.⁵⁸ We shall ignore the question of the order of these parts of education until Section 1b below, restricting ourselves to an exposition of the psychology

⁵⁵ *Pol.* VII.13.1332b5; *Pol.* VII.15.1334b10.

⁵⁶ The second clause, from ‘and’, interprets the somewhat difficult phrase “καὶ τὸ τέλος ἀπὸ τινος ἀρχῆς ἄλλου τέλους”. The translation follows Jowett (Oxford Revised Edition) loosely, and is justified by the context, which subordinates the ‘end’ of a process of generating and educating the body and the irrational soul to the end of generating and educating the rational soul.

⁵⁷ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b5-25.

⁵⁸ For the connection of parts to capacities, see *EN* I.13. For excellences as dispositions, see *EN* II.5 for moral, and VI.1.1139a15 for intellectual excellence, *inter alia*. For another explicit alignment of the two parts of education with the two capacities and dispositions of the soul, see *EN* II.1.1103a10-15.

that grounds this division.

The way in which Aristotle characterizes the two relevant parts of the soul is inherited from Platonic and popular psychology and is repeated in several other passages.⁵⁹ The division is made in terms of a dualism between the ‘rational’ and the ‘irrational’, between ‘reason’ and ‘desire’. Each of these parts is further subdivided: the ‘irrational’ is split into the vegetative which is fully irrational and the ‘appetitive’ or ‘desiring’ part (ἐπιθυμητικόν, ὀρεκτικόν), which shares in reason by listening or obeying, as we shall detail shortly.⁶⁰ The ‘rational’ is divided into the simple and the composite, the theoretical and the practical.⁶¹ All of these parts admit of some perfection by education except for the vegetative. The irrational part which shares in reason is perfected into *moral* excellence, good dispositions of desire and feeling.⁶² This is apparently a more narrow sense of moral excellence than that which has been equated with the ‘harmony’ of habit and reason.⁶³ These narrow moral excellences are also called ‘habits’ by Aristotle in this passage - the task of habitual education appears to be to cultivate these good dispositions of desire and feeling.⁶⁴ The ‘simple’ or theoretical part of the properly rational soul is perfected into the dispositions of scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), intuition of principles (νοῦς), and philosophic wisdom (σοφία), all of which simply know eternal truths.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ See especially *EN* I.13, VI.1.

⁶⁰ *EN* I.13.1102b1-30.

⁶¹ *EN* VI.1.1139a5.

⁶² *EN* I.13.1103a5, II.5. In this section we speak fairly indiscriminately of the ‘irrational’ soul as concerned with desires, passions, and later actions. In Section 2, and the coming chapters, we gain more precision on the psychological categories involved.

⁶³ As Jessica Moss (2012, pg. 169) has noted and we will continue to argue, the full ability to act well is for Aristotle a composite of prudence on the one hand and ‘moral excellence’ in the narrow sense of having tendencies to desire and feel correctly on the other. There is therefore an ambiguity in this section and throughout our work. We will sometimes speak of moral excellence as the full, mature, composite ability to desire, feel and act prudently (in this section, the ‘harmony’ of desire and reason), and at other times in the stricter sense of a tendency to desire and feel correctly, though not yet prudently, which is an element of that ‘full’ excellence. This reflects ambiguities in Aristotle’s text which generate some of our interpretive problems, but in both Aristotle and our own efforts context (or adjectives like ‘full’ and ‘narrow’) should make clear which sense of the term we are using.

⁶⁴ This can be inferred from the whole of *EN* II.

⁶⁵ *EN* VI.1.1139a5, 2.1139a25 for this generic function. VI. 3, 6, 7 for their specific definitions.

The ‘composite’ part of the rational soul is perfected in dispositions of the reasoned capacity to make or act complemented with right desire: these are divided, respectively, into art (τέχνη) and prudence (φρόνησις).⁶⁶ Both general classes of intellectual excellence appear to be the goal of instruction. But the focus of moral instruction will be on the mixed intellectual excellence of prudence, for it is prudence which judges what is good for man in his active life in general, and prudence is argued by Aristotle to be essential to the whole harmonious disposition of moral excellence in the broad sense.⁶⁷

How are we to give content to these psychological divisions? What are these two parts or capacities of the soul? What are their perfections? And how do their perfections harmonize in full excellence? In *Politics* and the parts of *Nicomachean Ethics* which rely most closely on Platonic and popular psychology, we get one version of an answer.⁶⁸ The soul which is rational in itself but practical and the irrational soul which ‘shares in’ reason are described as having complementary capacities and perfections. In a particularly clear passage in *Eudemian Ethics*, we read that “there are two parts of the soul that share in reason, but they share [in it] not in the same way, but the one by naturally tending to command, and the other by naturally tending to obey and listen.”⁶⁹ And a little further below, reason is described as a ruling principle (ἄρχην) which by nature governs desire and the passions (ὁρέξεως καὶ παθημάτων).⁷⁰ The clarity of these statements is complemented by the detail of that found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle infers the nature of the irrational soul’s share in reason from the practice of exhorting children – if children who are not yet in possession of reason can be exhorted in

⁶⁶ *EN* VI.2.1139a20-1139b1 for the generic function. VI.4-5, 7-13 for the specific ones, especially prudence and its elements.

⁶⁷ *EN* VI.5.1140b1-5, 13. Also II.6, which we will cite below.

⁶⁸ We are thinking mostly of our *Politics* theory of education and *EN* I.13.

⁶⁹ *EE* II.1.1219b25-30.

⁷⁰ *EE* II.1.1220a1.

words, the irrational soul must ‘listen to’ and ‘obey’ the reason in those words.⁷¹ The same passage draws similar conclusions from the case of incontinence and continence. The case of people who have desires and feelings which are contrary to their reasoned choice and who can either manage to ‘control’ them or fail to do so, indicates the existence of two distinct faculties, one of which commands and another which listens and obeys.⁷²

Thus the rational soul and its perfection in prudence is described as speaking, proposing, persuading, ruling, exhorting and commanding an ‘irrational’ part which by nature listens, is persuaded and obeys. This natural complementarity already indicates an account of the ‘harmony’ of these two parts. The distinction between these two capacities is not neutral: it already indicates an order of subordination. As the passage we quoted at length above indicates, the goal of the irrational soul is defined as relative to that of the rational soul.⁷³ The capacity to ‘listen to’ and ‘obey’ a reason that commands properly is already an excellence. This is clearest when we remember that continence and incontinence, from which Aristotle inferred the existence of these two capacities, are evaluative terms. It is written that we praise (ἐπαινοῦμεν) the reason and choice of incontinent men, but that some other source of desire and feeling fights (μάχεται) and resists (ἀντιτείνει), i.e. disobeys it. The ‘but’ here indicates that this is a source of blame, as is obviously confirmed by Aristotle’s general analysis of continence and incontinence.⁷⁴ This is confirmed even more strongly by Aristotle’s ranking, in

⁷¹ *EN* I.13.1102b30-1103a1.

⁷² *EN* I.13.1102b15-25. The debt of this argument to Plato’s arguments (*Rep* IV.435e-440a) that there are distinct parts of the soul is clear. The sense in which an incontinent or continent man has desires against his better choice is complex and controversial. For a recent account that seems to us to make sense of how incontinence represents a case of conflict between rational and irrational parts of the soul without compromising Aristotle’s commitment to a moderate intellectualism, see Moss 2012 pp. 100-133.

⁷³ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b10, 25.

⁷⁴ This would be even more obvious to a Greek speaker of the period, for these words are etymologically connected to strength and weakness, and ἐνκρατία in particular was a well-recognized virtue (though Aristotle denies it this status at *EN* VII.1.1145b5-20).

the same passage, of continence and excellence proper on a scale of goodness in proportion to how thoroughly reason is obeyed.⁷⁵ In continent men desires and feelings obey (πειθαρχεῖν) reason, in that they are endured or resisted and do not lead to bad actions. But in excellent men, they ‘hear reason well’ (εὐηκοώτεροι) and ‘speak with the same voice’ (ὁμοφωνεῖν) as it. As the verbal similarity between ὁμοφωνεῖν and συμφωνεῖν indicates, and the normative definition of ‘sharing in reason’ as ‘obeying reason’ confirms, the τέλος and excellence of the irrational soul which shares in reason is to *obey* reason, and this is the ‘best of harmonies’ of which our *Politics* passage speaks.

This conclusion is confirmed by the stricter definition of excellence of character in *Nicomachean Ethics* II.6 as “a disposition concerned with choice (ἔξις προαιρετική), lying in a mean relative to us, determined by reason and in the way the prudent man would determine it.”⁷⁶ The context of this definition makes it clear that this ‘disposition’ is a disposition of the irrational soul, a disposition of desires and passions. The other three elements of the definition - choice, the intermediate, and prudence/reason - indicate that full excellence of character is a harmony of irrational desires and passions with a commanding reason.

Take choice (προαίρεσις).⁷⁷ Aristotle understands choice as the principle and lord (ἀρχὴ καὶ κύριος) or ruler (τὸ ἡγούμενον) of action, and - we could add - desire and passion.⁷⁸ This is because it is choice which arbitrates between the several available motives, objects and

⁷⁵ EN I.13.1102b25.

⁷⁶ EN II.6.1106b35-1107a1.

⁷⁷ It is not our task to articulate the precise difference between the merely voluntary and the chosen. In his *La prudence chez Aristote*, especially pp. 64-95, Pierre Aubenque has worked to define the voluntary as the realm of *la contingent* (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ἄλλως ἔχειν), which is not necessitated in advance of animal volition. Choice is somewhat narrower and involves more uniquely human responsibility (EN III.2.1111b5).

⁷⁸ Choice appears most explicitly as a principle at MM I.11.1187b15. The phrase κυρίως comes in EE II.6.1223a5 description of man’s relation to certain actions; we infer that what gives him this relation is choice. For choice as ‘ruler’, see EN III.3.1113a5. The addition of desire and passion is not frivolous, for as we shall see (Chapter III, Section 1), choice is a principle of action through forming desires, on which passions, too are dependent.

passions on the standard of better or worse and intentionally selects one among them.⁷⁹ Because choice decides that one of these several possible options is better, choice or the man who chooses is responsible (αἰτιός) for the existence or non-existence of the action (desire, etc.), or at the very least the intention of it.⁸⁰ This fact is apparent from one of its consequences: it is choice which is properly subject to praise and blame; for choice makes us responsible for what is good or bad in our action or passion.⁸¹ The same can be said for excellence of character itself.⁸² This description of choice corresponds to the notion of prudence as the source of commands about the good and bad, confirming that the excellent desire, passion and action which is controlled by choice is the same as that which is in harmony with and obedient to rational command.

The same result follows from the definition of excellence as the disposition to *intermediate* desires, feelings and actions. When understood properly, this formulation does not mean to feel and desire in any very particular way, for example ‘moderately’. It means only to feel and to desire well and badly, where this is entirely equivalent with saying merely ‘according to reason’, according to reason’s nuanced and often variable judgement of what is good in the situation.⁸³ This is evident from *EN* II.6’s gloss of the intermediate as determined by reason or prudence. Prudence, the perfection of the mixed rational soul’s capacity to find practical truth, is what identifies the intermediate which makes the choice of an action or

⁷⁹ *EN* III.2.1112a10-15, 3.1113a1-10; *MM* I.17.1189a10-15; *EE* II.10.1226b5.

⁸⁰ *EN* III.5.1114a1-1114b10. This is implied in the very idea of choice as a principle that brings into existence things in our power.

⁸¹ This is evident throughout *EN* III.5, particularly at 1113b1-10.

⁸² *EN* III.5.1113b1-10, III.2.1111b1-5, II.5; *EE* II.11.1228a1.

⁸³ Deborah Achtenberg has argued this convincingly in *Cognition of Value*, pp. 97-122, especially 113-121. We shall consider the idea in some detail in Chapter II. For now it is enough to note the numerous passages which define excellence of character as not just a disposition of ‘moderate’ desire and feeling, but rather a disposition of desire and feeling ‘according to reason’ (*EE* II.2.1220b15-20; *EN* VI.1.1138b15-25, 13.1144b20-25, II.6.1107a5, 9.1109a20-25).

passion correct. Thus Aristotle can go so far as to define the practical truth of prudence as the agreement (ὁμολογία) of reason and desire in a formula strikingly similar to that of the harmony of habit and reason or the speaking in one voice of desire and reason.⁸⁴

It seems then, that the excellence which is the τέλος of the ‘irrational’ soul is precisely its harmony with reason, with prudence, where this harmony is conceived as the obedience of desire and feeling to the advice of prudence as to what, how, and for what reason to desire, feel and act. With this in place, we can now return to interpret what our *Politics* passage says about the order of the parts of education that is best designed to produce this harmony.

B) The Order of Education

So far we have attained a preliminary understanding of the parts of education and their respective contributions to the harmony of desire and reason that is full moral excellence. Habituation disposes the irrational part of the soul to desire and feel in obedience to reason. Instruction teaches the rational soul to be able to know and command what is good. The two perfected faculties together constitute full excellence, understood loosely as the capacity to command what is good and to obey those commands diligently. This understanding of education is *static*, however, whereas education is after all a *process* of generating excellence of character, of perfecting the soul. The crucial *Politics* passage we quoted in full contains a reflection on the temporal order of the parts of education that is best suited to producing excellence of character. Thus we read there that “it is [still] left [to us] to consider whether education must first be by reason or by habit. For these two must harmonize with one another [into] the best harmony.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *EN* VI.2.1139a20-25.

⁸⁵ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b5-10. The rest of the *Politics* of course gives the answer in some detail, by sketching the ideal

Aristotle introduces his answer by way of the obscure claim that the goal or end (τέλος) of some beginnings (ἀρχαί) are relative to some other end.⁸⁶ By what he goes on to say, we can roughly constitute the meaning of this principle as follows: some generations have a τέλος that is what it is only in relation to a further τέλος. We have already recognized part of why this is true: the τέλος of the irrational soul, excellence of character, is defined as obedience to or harmony with the τέλος of the rational soul, prudence. The formation of good habits therefore involves and makes use of an understanding of how it is good to act and to live, for habits are called good insofar as they are obedient to this understanding.⁸⁷

To what we have already recognized, though, Aristotle adds that the irrational soul precedes the rational soul in the order of generation. He takes it as obvious that the desiderative part of the soul (ἡ ὁρεξίς) is what comes first in the order of generation: for even children have spirit, wishes and desires.⁸⁸ They clearly do not, however, have the ability to calculate (ὁ λογισμός) what is in their benefit; nor do they have any insight (νοῦς) into what is good for them.⁸⁹ In short, they lack prudence and its preconditions. The part of the soul which is completed only by reason and by obedience to reason therefore nonetheless precedes reason in the order of generation. This allows for a ‘generative’ formulation of the principle that the τέλος of some things is in the τέλος of others: the τέλος of a process of generation can be relative to the τέλος of a later process of generation. The irrational soul is generated first but

educational curriculum. We will focus only on the general answer at the level of principles.

⁸⁶ τὸ τέλος ἀπὸ τίνος ἀρχῆς ἄλλου τέλους (*Pol.* VII.15.1334b10).

⁸⁷ The understanding of this point would be blurred by simply understanding τέλος as ‘goal’. This is corrected by Martha Nussbaum’s explication of the concept as ‘constitutive principle of activity’ (*De Motu*, Essay 1, pp.67-84). When we say that prudence, the τέλος of the rational soul, defines excellence of character, the τέλος of the irrational soul, we mean to say only that the completion of the irrational soul in excellence of character involves and presupposes the completion of the rational soul in prudence (because it is obedience *to* prudence).

⁸⁸ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b20. Only in Chapter III will we treat the relationship of these ‘irrational’ elements to one another.

⁸⁹ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b20.

has its τέλος in the generation of the rational soul and *its* τέλος.

Now education is the process whereby the *excellences*, the τέλοι, and not just the existences, of the soul and its capacities are generated. For this reason, this metaphysical principle about the τέλοι of generative processes guides Aristotle's view of the proper order of that education which achieves human excellence. We have already recognized in principle that the element of education concerning the habituation of the irrational soul is 'for the sake of' its completion by reason, insofar as it is defined as obedience to reason. We now can also recognize that habituation must come first, precisely because the part of the soul that it educates is generated first.⁹⁰ This twofold truth explains Aristotle's statement that the care (μελέτη) of the desiring part of the soul (ἡ ὁρεξις) must come before and yet also be for the sake of (ἐνεκα) the care of the rational soul.⁹¹ And this is precisely what he means when he calls the care of habits (μελέτη τῶν ἔθων) a 'preparation' (παρασκευάζειν) for (πρός) reason.⁹² This preparatory relationship is confirmed by several important passages treating the same subject.⁹³ Aristotle states repeatedly that arguments about excellence and happiness can only benefit individuals who already have the habit of living in accordance with reason. Otherwise they will fail to persuade us or at least to bear fruit in action. Good habituation precedes argument as fertile soil to a potent seed.

Now what, more concretely, is this relationship of preparation and completion which holds between habituation and instruction? Our current understanding of the respective functions of the irrational and rational souls as well as their perfections in obedience and

⁹⁰ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b25.

⁹¹ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b25.

⁹² *Pol.* VII.15.1334b15.

⁹³ Especially *EN* I.3.1095a1-10, X.9.1179a30-1180a20. We will return to these passages in some detail in Chapter III.

prudent command suggests an answer which is supported by additional passages on private and state education. In several passages Aristotle conceives of education as a relationship between men of prudence on the one hand and children and youth without prudence on the other.⁹⁴ Further, habitual education is a matter of developing excellent habits by performing excellent actions.⁹⁵ Now as we have seen, the education of the irrational soul by the method of habituation begins at a time when the soul cannot yet command itself about what is good, but can hear, listen to, and obey such commands. We infer that the older and prudent members of society - initially the father and subsequently the state at large - command the younger and imprudent ones to desire and perform good actions and to feel the right passions. The youth does so without himself possessing judgements about what makes these good, for he lacks reason and prudence. This habituation process eventually produces a disposition of ‘obedience to reason’ wherein one performs and desires the right actions and feels the right passions by habit without understanding why they are right.⁹⁶ This is excellence of character in the narrow sense, and is possessed by those who are ‘good’ (ἀγαθός) but do not have the power of prudent judgement or command.

Without prudence, such a person will be forever in a disposition to moral heteronomy, even though he will often act and feel correctly in an external sense. Once the rational soul begins to develop, instruction teaches the youth to understand and command what is good for himself. However, if he did not first have strict habits of obedience, he will have difficulty

⁹⁴ *EN* X.9.1180b1-5 explicitly compares the force of paternal command in the household to the force of law in the state, as modes of education. and *EN* X.9.1180a20 states that the law is a reason proceeding from a sort of prudence and insight (λόγος ὃν ἀπὸ τινος φρονήσεως καὶ νοῦ). *Pol.* I.13 also defines household relations between the father and his subordinates (slaves, women, children) by the principle of excellence and prudence, and *Pol.* VII.14 extends the same principle to the order of command and obedience in the state generally.

⁹⁵ *EN* II.1-4 argues that good dispositions are produced by good actions.

⁹⁶ *EN* II.4.1105a30-1105b1 thus says that habituation produces a disposition to excellence without knowledge, and Aristotle picks up on this point in recognizing a disposition which is ‘in accordance with reason’ without implying the presence of right reason in the agent himself (*EN* VI.13.1144b20-25).

fulfilling his own commands. He will be in the disposition needing continence which we saw above. The irrational element of his soul will be unruly and badly trained and the two parts of his soul in disharmony. Therefore he will experience conflict and be forced to resort to continence, and will be excluded from true excellence, the harmony of reason and habit. This is why habituation must precede instruction, and good habits of obedience to another the ability to command oneself. Only if education proceeds in the proper order can the fruit of obedience to one's own commands develop smoothly; habitual obedience to the commands of others who know better prepares the youth to command himself effectively later in life.

Section 2: The Psychology of Choice and the Question of Education

A) The Need for a More Precise Psychology

We have therefore achieved a schematic interpretation of Aristotelian moral education. We have seen that it is divided into two parts corresponding to two soul faculties and their perfections. The parts are ordered in such a way as to most effectively produce the overall goal: the harmony of desire and reason, prudence and excellence. First, habituation prepares the soul by instilling habits of obedience in the desiring and feeling part of the soul. At the end of this process the youth has learned to obey the commands of men of prudence - he desires and performs excellent actions and feels excellent feelings by habit and without knowledge. This is indispensable for the eventual perfection of his developing rational faculties by *instruction*: now the youth becomes capable of knowing and commanding for himself what is good. Both steps must be completed, and in this order, if the youth is to become capable of that harmonious self-command and self-obedience which is full excellence.

Now we must note that our account so far has rested on a select group of passages in Aristotle which suggest strong dualisms between reason and desire as soul-faculties, and

obedience and command as their excellent dispositions. Similarly, habituation appeared to be a largely mechanical and mindless process which prepares for prudence, which alone has autonomy and thought. Now these dualisms have some support in the text and effectively characterize certain aspects of the habituation process and its psychological categories. Aristotle does speak of ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ functions of soul and does define their excellences and functions correlatively. He does speak of prudence as a ruler of action which makes commands, and his thought on excellence, continence and incontinence does seem to acknowledge a correlative function of obedience in the ‘irrational’ soul. Similarly, he divides political relations into relationships of obedience and command which correspond to the distinction between moral excellence in the narrow sense and full, prudential excellence.

Nonetheless, when we recall certain facts about Aristotle’s psychology, and his moral psychology in particular, we can see clearly that these dualistic categories are not exact terms of analysis in the study of the soul or of the educational process that perfects it. This is hinted at by Aristotle’s explicit acknowledgement that his way of dividing the capacities of the soul in the practical works is imprecise, and that this imprecision is demanded by the very nature of practical philosophy.⁹⁷ When we turn to Aristotle’s more precise psychology, we see the inverse side of this thought. In that psychology, the several faculties of the soul are not distinguished most exactly by the binaries of ‘reason’ and ‘desire’. We do find the distinction between discrimination or cognition (τὸ κριτικόν) and desire (ὄρεξις), but these are not faculties of soul so much as they are aspects of *every* faculty of soul, which possess them in various grades of complexity and perfection. Every practical faculty of soul discriminates a

⁹⁷ Thus *EN* I.13.1102a15-30 makes it clear that the student of politics needs only an imprecise and practically relevant concept of the soul and its faculties. For a general discussion of the ‘subject matter imprecision’ that follows from the purpose of ethics for Aristotle, see Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value*, pp.72-86.

specific object, and also discriminates good and bad in that object, grounding a specific form of motivation.⁹⁸

It will therefore be inaccurate to say that full excellence is a harmony of ‘reason’ and ‘desire’, for these do not indicate actual soul faculties. As we have seen, prudence is the perfection of choice. As we will see, Aristotle defines choice as a faculty of deliberate desire, desire formed by a specifically *rational* form of cognition.⁹⁹ It will also be for a specific object, a particular action in our power which we judge to be good. What we have been calling the ‘desiring’ part of the soul must be defined more precisely as the part of the soul which desires and feels with *irrational* forms of cognition, namely perception (αἴσθησις) and imagination (φαντασία).¹⁰⁰ They, too, will be oriented to objects seen as good, rather than being dumb or mechanical impulses, and will ground specific forms of motivation: appetite (ἐπιθυμία), spirit (θύμος), and in some sense also wish (βουλήσις).¹⁰¹ In this capacity, as we shall begin to see in the next sub-section, they will actually help to guide and form the deliberations about and choices of particular objects, further blurring the boundaries between ‘reason’ and ‘desire’.

These facts must have consequences for how we conceive the perfection of these faculties. It will no longer be satisfying to say that ‘desire’ is excellent merely by obeying. Because the irrational soul has cognitions of objects as good, its excellence will have to be defined by a ‘correctness’ in object not reducible to obedience; it will have to ‘see rightly’ in

⁹⁸ This nuance of Aristotle’s psychology is clearly expressed in the *De Anima* account of local movement, particularly *DA* III.9.432a15-432b5, 10.433a10-433b1. For the idea of the cumulative perfection of soul-grades, see especially *DA* III.11-13. Jessica Moss (2012, Part I, esp. pp. 3-22) has worked to establish this point in more detail than we are able to, and other interpreters, such as Achtenberg (2002 pp.159-178) and Nussbaum (1986 pp. 273-276, 307-309) have done so in somewhat less detail.

⁹⁹ This becomes clear at *EN* III.3.1113a10 and will be treated more thoroughly below and throughout Chapter II especially.

¹⁰⁰ We cover this ground in Chapters II and III, relying on Jessica Moss’ guidance.

¹⁰¹ For the ambiguous status of wish as rational but grounded significantly in irrational forms of cognition, see Moss’ interpretation (2012, pp. 161-162, 174-179, 219-233), which I accept in its essentials.

its own way. If it is also ‘commanded’, this will have to be as a partner that is somehow intelligent, who (as Aristotle has said) ‘listens to’ and ‘agrees with’ reason, allowing itself to be determined by it. Conversely, it will no longer do to understand the power of command as a function of some purely self-moving ‘reason’. Not only will prudent choice be a form of desire, it will be correct partly because of the guidance of the irrational desires it helps to form, and it will ‘command’ and ‘form’ them in accordance with the guidance of their own wishes.

It will be the task of the rest of the thesis to sketch the mutual determinations of these cognitive and affective faculties more precisely and infer from this a more precise account of the preparatory function of habituation in moral education. For these psychological nuances must have consequences here. The cultivation of ‘obedient’ habits cannot be conceived as a mechanical and passive process. If the faculty thus cultivated is a cognitive one, and its perfection demands the evaluative and affective cognition of the correct objects, habituation will be a cognitive process. Likewise, the preparation these habits provide cannot be conceived as mechanical tendencies which prepare for that ‘reason’ which alone is truly autonomous and active, as a road prepares for the driver. If prudent choice must be guided by the irrational but cognitive desires of habit, habituation must give rational deliberation some initial cognitive guidance, and thereby prepare for instruction and for the eventual development of correct and effective choice. How are we to understand the preparatory role of habituation in guiding and obeying prudent choice while doing justice to the irrational cognitive status of habits?

B) The Guiding Analysis of Choice

The principal method of the remainder of the thesis is to take Aristotle’s psychological account of prudent choice, the perfection of the ‘commanding’ element of full moral excellence, as a guide to understanding the unique psychological faculties of habit and

deliberate thought. This is because Aristotle analyzes prudent choice as a combination of habitual moral excellence, understood as ‘right intention’, with correct deliberation. This analysis reveals habitual intentions to be pre-rational but cognitive motivations indispensable for full excellence insofar as they guide rational deliberation. The analysis of choice thus allows us to approach the peculiar cognitive contribution made by habituation to excellence of character, and in particular its ruling part.

The present section sketches the major elements of the analysis of choice, which Chapters II and III develop in more detail. In several passages in the ethical and psychological works, Aristotle analyzes choice into a faculty composed of two other faculties, the habitual *intention* of ends and rational *deliberation* about how to achieve ends. He analyzes choice into the composite of the perfections of these two faculties, namely the intention of the right ends and skillful or effective deliberation about their achievement.¹⁰²

We will begin with the bare faculty, ‘choice’, beginning from two passages which give exactly parallel accounts of its elements. In *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.2, Aristotle says:

The principle of action – its efficient and not its final cause (οὗ ἕνεκα) - is choice, and the origin of choice is desire and reasoning for the sake of something (ὄρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος). That is why choice cannot exist without mind and thinking (νοῦ καὶ διανοίας) and without a disposition of character (ἠθικῆς) [...]. Thought (διανοία) by itself, however, moves nothing, but only intellect that is for the sake of something and is practical [...] Good action is an end, and desire aims at this (ἡ ὄρεξις τούτου).¹⁰³

This passage gestures very precisely but in summary fashion to an account of choice that is repeated several times. We are told that choice has two principles. First, ‘reason’. But note here that not simply ‘reason’ is identified: rather a specific kind of reason, that which is practical and ‘for the sake of something’. Because of this qualification, not *only* reason is

¹⁰² Jessica Moss (2012, 155-163) has the same interpretation of the same texts. Many of my arguments parallel hers.

¹⁰³ *EN* VI.2.1139a30-1139b1.

required. Choice also demands ‘desire’, for desire, unlike reason, is inherently for the sake of an end, such as good action. Notice also that desire is assimilated to a disposition of character for, as we have seen, character is a habitual disposition of motivation and passion. Both a disposition of character (desires for the sake of some end) and reason for the sake of that end is required.

The following passage from *De Anima* III.10 gives us a somewhat fuller account of the specific forms of desire and reason at play here:

Both of these are sources of motion in place: thought (νοῦς) and desire (ὄρεξις), and [only] thought that calculates for the sake of an end and is practical (it differs from contemplation in the end (τῷ τέλει)). All desire is for the sake of something: for the object of desire is itself the principle of practical thought, and what is last [in the order of thought] is first in [the order of] action.¹⁰⁴

The passage further defines practical reason as calculation (τὸ λογιστικόν), a term that appeared already in the *Politics* passage on the two parts of the soul.¹⁰⁵ Aristotle uses calculation as a synonym for deliberation, a central concept in the *Nicomachean Ethics* discussion of choice, where choice is actually defined as deliberate desire of something in our power, desire formed in accordance with deliberation.¹⁰⁶ The last clause of the passage from *De Anima* is in fact a reference to the contribution of deliberation to choice and to action. We shall discuss deliberation in detail in Chapter II but can note for now that Aristotle defines it as thought which ‘calculates’ how to achieve a predetermined goal in a specific situation. The deliberator begins with an idea of what he would like to achieve and focuses his thought on how it would best be achieved, until he reaches the first thing that he must do to achieve it.

Now deliberation belongs to the mixed part of the rational soul because it is involved

¹⁰⁴ *DA* III.10.433a10-15.

¹⁰⁵ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b20.

¹⁰⁶ *EN* III.3. For the equation of deliberation and calculation, see *EN* VI.1.1139a10.

with practice and is implicated in practical forms of desire.¹⁰⁷ The present passage acknowledges this by emphasizing that the practical, calculative thought that seeks some end operates within the compass of a prior desire for that end as its principle. Desire, as we saw, is never completely ‘irrational’; it is oriented towards some object as its goal. Deliberation, as we have just seen, is limited to trying to achieve this goal. Desire and the disposition of character which desires therefore appears to set the end which deliberation seeks to achieve. This calculation continues until the deliberator reaches an action that can be performed immediately, articulating a ‘path’ to the object, and producing a deliberate desire called ‘choice’.¹⁰⁸

It would seem then that the psychology of choice consists of the interaction of two basic faculties and their different functions: desire for the ends of action and deliberation about how to realize these ends. As we have already recognized, the analysis of prudent choice can be expected to consist of the perfections of these two faculties. These perfections will consist of moral or habitual excellence and intellectual excellence in some more restricted sense than prudent choice itself.¹⁰⁹ We can now sketch these elements much more clearly, showing that prudent choice is analyzed into moral excellence understood as right intention and skill in calculating how to achieve the intended object.

The most crucial *Nicomachean Ethics* passage where this analysis is made is found in chapter 12 of Book VI.¹¹⁰ Here Aristotle responds to the objection that prudence and the

¹⁰⁷ *EN* VI.1.1139a10. *EN* VI.9 defines deliberation as a form of inquiry or seeking (ζητεῖν) which, as Nussbaum comes close to stating explicitly (*Fragility* pp. 307-309) is inherently motivational.

¹⁰⁸ The passages of the minor ethics which parallel this analysis are just as unambiguous: ‘choice’ is analyzed into two well-distinguished and mutually complementary faculties, the desire of an end and the deliberation about how to attain it. (*EE* II.11.1227b10-1228a1; *MM* I.18-19). *EE* II.11.1227b20-25 and 35 is particularly clear on this point: “there is no syllogism or reasoning about the aim [of action]” and “to achieve that which is for the sake of [the end] belongs to another faculty [than character-desire]”.

¹⁰⁹ Here I may differ slightly from Moss (2012, pp. 179-198), who tends to identify prudence itself with good deliberation, whereas I emphasize that skill in deliberation is a value-neutral intellectual power that must be complemented by moral excellence to qualify as prudence.

¹¹⁰ *EN* VI.12.1144a5-35. A cursory reading of VI.13 might suggest that it achieves the same analysis, but as we shall indicate in Chapter III, it actually analyzes full moral excellence into natural excellence and prudence, a

related practical intellectual excellences (σύνεσις, γνώμη, etc.) are not useful for making human beings good (ἀγαθός), in the sense of capable of good action; for this the objection claims that pre-rational excellence of character is enough.¹¹¹ Aristotle retorts that prudence would be necessary for goodness even if it were useless, but then also denies that it is useless. The initial reason he gives is that “the function [of man] is achieved (τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται) [only] in accordance with prudence and excellence of character: for excellence makes the aim right (τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν) and prudence the things contributing to it (τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον).”¹¹² This answer analyzes the human function – in this case action in accordance with right reason - into two distinct psychological capacities whose perfections let it be performed. Excellence of character, the perfection of desire, makes the aim of action right. And prudence, whose function is equivalent to deliberation here, makes the things contributing to the aim right.

After emphasizing that a person is said to be good not merely by doing the right actions, but above all by doing them from choice, by choosing them for themselves (αὐτῶν ἔνεκα),¹¹³ Aristotle appears to repeat this twofold analysis, stating that “excellence makes the choice right, but what should naturally be done for the sake of this belongs not to excellence but to another faculty (ἐτέρας δυνάμεως).”¹¹⁴ The formulation seems to parallel the line quoted just above, allowing us to surmise that the ‘choice’ which excellence makes right is the aim or end of the action.¹¹⁵ Rather than identifying the ‘other faculty’ with prudence, however, he

subtle difference which will help us define habitual moral excellence still more precisely there.

¹¹¹ The objection is articulated at *EN* VI.12.1143b20-30.

¹¹² *EN* VI.12.1144a5. We shall discuss this translation of τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον in Chapter II (Section 1).

¹¹³ *EN* VI.12.1144a10-15.

¹¹⁴ *EN* VI.12.1144a20.

¹¹⁵ In his commentary, Terence Irwin (1999, pp. 252-255) has suggested that this formulation of the function of excellence should be read in light of the fact that ‘choice’ is deliberate desire of what contributes to the ends of action. On this basis, he has suggested that ‘excellence of character’ in VI.12 refers to full, deliberative excellence, which is allowed to ‘set the ends’ insofar as it unfolds or specifies their elements. For Irwin no excellence worth the name precedes deliberation. We must note that the reading of ‘choice’ that supports this interpretation is problematic. The assumption that ‘choice’ must be read as ‘deliberate desire’ in every case is false. Pierre Aubenque (1963, pp. 119-126) has shown that προαίρεσις has a technical and a non-technical meaning. The

says: “there is a faculty called skillfulness (δεινότητα) and this is such as is able to do the things which tend towards an aim that has [already] been set (τὰ πρὸς τὸν ὑποτεθέντα σκοπὸν συντείνοντα) and to achieve it.”¹¹⁶ This is the first and only occurrence of the term ‘skillfulness’ in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹¹⁷ Notice, however, that the language used to describe this faculty is the same as that used to describe deliberation or calculating. Skillfulness is a faculty of identifying and achieving the things that contribute to an end that has already been set, and apparently excellence of character is what sets this aim.¹¹⁸

Aristotle goes on to make a comment which explains why he uses this word instead of prudence, in a passage which we interpret as analyzing ‘prudence’ as a mixed excellence, simultaneously moral and intellectual, constituted by the harmonious combination of excellence of character and ‘skillfulness’, a value-neutral, purely efficient capacity to deliberate:

Now if the aim is noble (καλός), the skillfulness is praiseworthy, but if it is base (φαῦλος), the skillfulness is villainy (πανουργία): for this reason both men of prudence and villains are said

technical meaning, defined in *EN* III.3, is deliberate desire. The non-technical meaning is more like the ‘intention’ of an end and is very close to wish (βούλησις), as we will indicate in Chapter III. In passages in which ‘deliberate desire’ is analyzed into the distinct psychological functions of deliberation and desire for an end, Aristotle sometimes refers to the latter as ‘choice’, in its non-technical meaning. This is very clear at *EE* II.11.1227b10, b35-1228a1, which uses the term in both ways, making their contrasting meanings incontestable. Since, as we are currently arguing, much of the *EN* VI.12 passage’s language parallels such analyses, we see no reason to require that ‘choice’ means deliberate desire there: we interpret it as the ‘intention’ of an end *prior to* deliberation.

¹¹⁶ *EN* VI.12.1144a20-25. Our translation of δεινότητα as ‘skillfulness’ captures the sense of being ‘clever’ and also ‘effective’.

¹¹⁷ It also appears in Book VII chapter 8 (1152a10), but in transparent reference to the VI.12 discussion.

¹¹⁸ Part of Irwin’s interpretation is to claim that ‘skillfulness’ refers to a more purely instrumental ability to implement an already determinate choice (deliberate desire). Aside from the fact that the reading of ‘choice’ which motivates this interpretation is invalid, we can note that it seems to forcibly overlook the most natural reading of ‘skillfulness’. As we show in the body, the language used to describe skillfulness is the same as that used to describe deliberation, and Aristotle tends not to discriminate strictly between that language’s ‘constitutive’ and more narrowly instrumental connotations. We see no reason to restrict the meaning of the term to its narrowly instrumental connotation here. (For the reader who wants further support to the idea that ‘skillfulness’ is skill in deliberating, it is perhaps enough to note that *EE* II.11, which analyzes choice even more clearly into the intention of the end and the thinking of what contributes to it, at one point (1228a1) introduces deliberation or calculation itself as ‘another faculty’ in language exactly paralleling *EN* VI.12.1144a20’s way of introducing skillfulness.) Similarly, Irwin’s interpretation would seem to arbitrarily restrict the meaning of the ‘prudence’ constituted out of the combination of skillfulness and excellence of character to an external faculty of *effecting* choices, whereas Aristotle typically intends prudence to include both such effectiveness as well as the inner choice of an action, and makes no clear signal that we are to interpret the term otherwise in this case.

to be skillful. Prudence is not this faculty [skillfulness], but it does not exist without this faculty. And this eye of the soul [prudence] does not acquire its disposition (ἔξις) without excellence, as has been said and is clear, for syllogisms about actions have a starting point, namely ‘since such and such is the end and what is best’, [...] and this [principle] is not apparent (οὐ φαίνεται) except to the good man, for wickedness (μοχθηρία) perverts us (διαστρέφει) and makes us deceived about the principles of action. Therefore it is evident that it is impossible to be prudent without being good.¹¹⁹

The first two sentences and the last one appear unambiguously to define prudence as ‘the skillfulness of the good’.¹²⁰ One and the same faculty for achieving ends, ‘skillfulness’, has two manifestations depending on whether the ends it aims to achieve are noble or base, good or bad. When the ends are noble, skillfulness is prudence and is praiseworthy. When they are base, it is villainy and is blameworthy. The word villainy, πανουργία, invites etymological interpretation in the light of πᾶν (all) and ἐργόν (work); it has the connotation of craftiness, a kind of pursual of pure efficiencies indifferent to the noble or base character of the goal.¹²¹ Prudence, on the other hand, must be limited by a noble goal. It is the ability to deliberate well for the sake of and to actually achieve not just any end, but rather noble ends.¹²²

The rest of the passage explains this basic assertion and gives detail on how excellence of character provides the noble ends which deliberation seeks to attain. The language parallels the psychological passages we cited above. Excellence of character causes some end of action to appear to the excellent person. This end is the principle of deliberation, which is here represented as a syllogism.¹²³ Excellence of character makes what is truly the end of life actually appear to be the end of life, and its opposite makes the opposite ends appear good.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ EN VI.12.1144a25-35.

¹²⁰ For this formula and for comments on how the difficulty of this text is due to the inherent ambiguity of the idea of prudence as an intellectual virtue concerned with moral action, see Aubenque (1963, pp. 116-119).

¹²¹ Odysseus’ cleverness is perhaps the typical example. Rowe translates it well as ‘unscrupulousness’.

¹²² Note that this is already contained in the analysis of excellence in deliberation (εὐβουλία) (EN VI.9.1142b15) - another indication of the difficulty of the concept of intellectual excellence cited by Aubenque.

¹²³ We shall note in Chapter II (Sections 1 and 5) that the practical syllogism is a propositional description of deliberation and shall give much more detail about its principles and what it means to satisfy them.

¹²⁴ Many passages confirm our connection of excellence of character to the grasp of universal ends of action. EN VI.5.1140b10-15, for example, identifies an *excellence*, temperance, as something that preserves prudence by

These are the universal premises and starting points of each person's deliberation, which then seeks the best way to achieve this apparently best end. Skill in deliberation, in identifying the best path to this general object, must be guided by a correct intention of ends if it is to count as prudence and result in the choice of actions which actually satisfy the ends of life. This is what it means to say that the disposition of prudence is formed by excellence of character's grasp of the end, and that it is impossible to be prudent without also being good.

In this passage distinguishing prudence from skillfulness Aristotle therefore has consistently analyzed prudent choice into a complex, simultaneously moral and intellectual excellence. Prudence depends on excellence of character combined with effective skill in deliberating. Excellence of character sets the ends which guide deliberation's search for what will achieve or realize them. For prudence, both the ends and the things that achieve the ends must be right: two distinct capacities of the soul must achieve perfection.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have therefore done four things. First of all, we have provided a general sketch of Aristotle's educational program in its goal, parts and order of development. We have found that moral education seeks the perfection of the mixed rational and irrational souls in full excellence of character, the harmony of reason as prudence and habit as moral excellence. We have found that education consists of two basic parts, habituation and instruction, which perfect the mixed 'irrational' and 'rational' souls, respectively. We have also found that habituation precedes and prepares for instruction, in an order that must be followed

preserving the appearance of the principles, namely the ends, of action, and a vice (intemperance) as destroying their appearance by an excessive sensitivity to pleasure or pain. *EN* VII.8.1151a15 makes the same point more generally. We will see in Chapter III that the precise faculty which preserves the principles of action is the irrational parallel of 'wish' (βούλησις).

if true, full excellence of character is to result.

In providing this general sketch we gave an initial interpretation of the parts of the soul with which education is concerned, their perfections, and the role of the two stages of education in achieving these perfections. This interpretation was guided by Aristotle's popular and imprecise psychology, according to which the soul is divided into an 'irrational' part which listens to reason and is perfected in obedience to it, and a 'rational' part which knows what is good and is perfected in prudentially commanding the irrational part. Full excellence on this interpretation requires the true command of an irrational soul that is strictly disciplined in its obedience to rational commands. Habituation must precede instruction in creating a firm tendency to obey the reason of others, which prepares the youth to obey his own reason once this is developed.

After giving this general sketch, we claimed that while this account is not wholly inadequate, it is psychologically imprecise. Aristotle's precise psychology does not oppose 'reason' and 'desire' as faculties, but rather includes several faculties, each of which is a species of both discrimination and motivation. More particularly, choice is not some abstract 'reason' and power of command, and habits are not mindless and passive desires and affections. Choice is a specific form of desire and is guided by pre-rational, habitual desires, which have their own form of cognition. Habits, in turn, 'obey' reason as cognitive partners, not as inarticulate or mechanical urges. The rest of the thesis aims to describe more precisely the cognitive desires and affections proper to good habituation, as well as how they help prepare for prudent choice and obedience to prudent choice.

As we have indicated, we will focus mostly on finding the respective places of habitual excellence and rational deliberation in the faculty of choice and its perfection in prudence, the

ruling element of full moral excellence. To this end we have given a preliminary, guiding analysis of prudent choice: it is the combination of habitually right intention with skill in deliberation. The following two chapters will take each of these elements in turn and infer from their analysis to the contribution of the two parts of education: habituation and instruction. Chapter II will analyze good deliberation's function in choice as well as the function of an instruction in deliberation. This will prepare for Chapter III, which will fill in the gap left in this analysis by showing the role of habitually right intention and habituation in prudent choice.

Even though in this way we displace the role of 'obedience' in moral excellence and our analysis somewhat, it remains true that full moral excellence is a harmony of prudence and obedient desires and cannot be analyzed solely in terms of prudence. At the end of Chapter III, we will remember this fact and briefly explain how habituation's role in forming prudence also helps guarantee obedience to prudent commands.

Chapter II: Deliberation and Instruction in Deliberation

The present chapter begins the analysis of choice and education in choice by focusing on its rational element or aspect. Choice involves a form of thinking which Aristotle calls deliberation (βούλησις). What is deliberation? What are its objects and its mode of thinking? What does deliberation contribute to decision-making? How is it evaluated as good or bad? And what can we infer from the answers to these questions about how human beings are instructed in deliberation? These are the questions that occupy us in this chapter.

First (Section 1) we will review the basic outlines of Aristotelian deliberation. Deliberation is a process of creatively specifying general and universal ends or goals to definite situations of action in order to identify that course of action among those available to us which best achieves or instantiates those ends or goals. There is significant agreement on this account of deliberation, but Section 2 identifies two areas of difficulty in interpretation. First of all, how are these ends or goals (τέλῃ) of deliberation to be interpreted, and what is their precise relation to the courses of action which deliberation claims they are ‘achieved’ or ‘instantiated’ by? In particular, is there a metaphysical relationship here which grounds the evaluation of deliberate decisions? Secondly, does deliberation’s decision of what is good extend beyond particular actions which satisfy these ends to (some of) the ends themselves?

In Section 3 we argue that there is a metaphysical account of the ends of deliberation and the relation of these ends to the actions identified as good by deliberation. We defend an adapted version of Deborah Achtenberg’s interpretation of the metaphysics of ‘good’ in Aristotle. The principle of deliberation (εὐδαιμονία) is a complex principle admitting of several specific and individual instantiations, which are however related hierarchically and analogically to one another, as higher or lower expressions of this principle. In Section 4 we

use this account to explain how deliberation constitutes particular actions as good and to suggest that it can do so without also deciding on new ends or goals not already given as principles. Deliberation, we suggest, discovers which particular action in a definite situation is the best or most complete available realization of εὐδαιμονία. It does so by the mutually supporting work of imagining and thinking particular available actions in the light of this pre-given principle and its major elements.

Finally, in Section 5, we will indicate in general and in principle the nature of deliberative instruction. We will claim that deliberation is a type of thinking that works with partly the same objects as philosophical ethics and metaphysics, but which treats these objects in a more practical mode, with less precision, universality and clarity. Instruction in deliberation is the same – it is a pre-philosophical process of existential, pragmatic acclimatization to the very same objects and principles as can later be studied explicitly and theoretically in philosophy. Similar relationships hold between the rational and imaginative functions in deliberation and in instruction in deliberation.

Section 1: Deliberation Instantiates Ends in Particular Situations

The first step in our interpretation of the deliberative aspect of prudence is to give an overview of how Aristotle presents it in the most relevant texts.¹²⁵ As Pierre Aubenque notes,¹²⁶ he does so by reference to its characteristic object. This, in short, is the object of choice. We deliberate about those things which are in our power and possible interest to do or not do. This means that they must be 'contingent' in the strict sense of not being determined

¹²⁵ *EN* III.3, VI.1139a5-10, 2.1139b5-10, 5.1140a25-1140b10, 7.1141b5-10; *MM*.I.17; *EE* II.10.

¹²⁶ 1963, pp. 64-70.

by their nature to happen always in the same way.¹²⁷ But they must also be 'contingent' in the further sense that they are possible in the definite situation in which we find ourselves.¹²⁸ Further, they must be possible actions that concern us in the time, place and roles we find ourselves in. Finally, they must not admit of so perfect regulation by pre-formed rules of action that the best course of action is immediately apparent and requires little to no thought.¹²⁹

We have already seen that the point and result of deliberation is a choice which prefers one such course of action over others, and that this preference is for an action judged to be better than others. But by what standard is 'the better' evaluated in deliberation? This brings us to the second important feature of this type of thinking: deliberation evaluates what is the best available course to accomplishing a pre-given end, rather than what is the best end. In a characteristic passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, with clear parallels in the other ethical works,¹³⁰ we read:

We deliberate not about ends (τῶν τέλων) but rather about the things that contribute to ends (περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη). For a doctor does not deliberate about whether he will heal, nor an orator about whether he will persuade, nor a statesman about whether he will produce law and order, nor anyone else about his end. Rather, having set (θέμενοι) the end they consider how and by what things (πῶς καὶ διὰ τίνων) it will be [accomplished], and if it seems to be [possible] through many, they consider through which it will be [accomplished] most easily and best (κάλλιστα), and if [it seems to be possible] through one, [they will consider] how and through what this will be accomplished (ἐπιτελουμένου)¹³¹ [...].

The passage goes on to illustrate how this process of thinking about how to best accomplish a given end continues until a definite course of action within our power is preferred and we reach the first thing we can do to further it: this, and the whole course of action it leads

¹²⁷ This is one thing distinguishing deliberation from science (ἐπιστήμη), as in *EN* VI.5.1140a30-1140b1).

¹²⁸ For a more detailed analysis of contingency than we can give see *La prudence chez Aristote*, pp. 64-90.

¹²⁹ For this aspect, see *EN* III.3.1112a-1112b10. The apparent fact that the development of the rules-based arts can narrow the sphere of deliberation perhaps sheds light on the meaning of the claim in the *Physics* that (perfect) art does not deliberate (*Physics* II.8.199b25). The inadequacy of rules for Aristotelian deliberation has been the subject of much recent discussion and will concern us in much of what follows.

¹³⁰ *MM* I.17.1189a5-10, 25; *EE* II.10.1226a5-15, 1226b10-25, 1227a5-25. We cite the *Eudemian Ethics* more thoroughly below.

¹³¹ *EN* III.3.1112b10-15.

to, is then chosen as the best available path in our circumstances.

The quoted passage summarizes nicely the principle on which deliberation evaluates possible actions, and on which it is itself evaluated as good or as bad. In a concrete situation the end or goal is already set and is not questioned in principle by the deliberator. He rather turns his attention to how this end can be most effectively and best ‘accomplished’, a word which in its Greek equivalent even bears the root ‘end’. This relation between ends and ‘means’ in deliberation should not surprise us, since Aristotle began his ethical treatise with the assertion that all action and choice aims at some good or end.¹³² In other places, he is emphatic that the end for the sake of which actions are done (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα τὰ πράκτα) is the principle (ἀρχή) of action, meaning that for the sake of this and on account of it (διὰ τοῦτο) one must choose and do everything (δεῖν αἰρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν).¹³³ The person deliberating thus “considers from the point of view of the end” (ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους ἔσκειται), what he can do which can contribute to the end, and in this process the end is an aim (σκοπός), and assumption (ὑπόθεσις) by reference to which the deliberator “considers what is beneficial” (πρὸς ὃν σκοπεῖ τὸν συμφέρον).¹³⁴ In other words, the end for the sake of which we are deliberating sets the standard of what is to count as beneficial and as effectively and well done. Deliberation accepts and starts from this standard and tries to work out what, among the available courses of action, is best.¹³⁵ And it is judged successful or unsuccessful based on how well it has identified what is the ‘best course attainable by action’¹³⁶ according to the standard of the end itself and the

¹³² *EN* I.1.1094a1.

¹³³ *EN* VI.5.1140b15.

¹³⁴ *EE* II.10.1227a5-20.

¹³⁵ See here Moss’ claim (2012, pp.180-183) that prudence, which she equates with good deliberation, has a ‘supposition’ of the end not in the sense that it *supplies* the end, but in the sense of rationally accepting the end *as* end and aiming all activity at it.

¹³⁶ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀνθρώπου τῶν πρακτῶν. *EN* VI.7.1141b10. The reference is to prudent choice’s good aim and not merely deliberation, but the passage specifies that this aim is ‘in accordance with calculation’ (κατὰ τὸν λογισμὸν).

facts about what actions are available.¹³⁷

Good deliberation (εὐβουλία) is thus an ability to inventively and effectively recognize the available courses to the achievement of a fixed goal and select the most effective course, which will best achieve the goal. It is in large part for this reason that it demands familiarity with the facts of life and an ability to perceive their significance for one's goal.¹³⁸ Because the circumstances of life and the possible courses of action are endlessly variable in their detail, the options available for deliberation and the prescription of a right action are not fixed in advance by any simple rules of how to achieve a goal. One must weigh each situation on its own merit in order to be able to discern how to best achieve one's end.

Such are the fairly uncontroversial contours of what Aristotle says about deliberation. The interpretation of these statements is, however, a matter of some difficulty. Aristotle's clear emphasis on the attainment of pre-determined ends in his analysis of deliberation has troubled some commentators.¹³⁹ Isn't it strange if ethical thought and choice restricts itself to implementing presupposed ends or goals, what we might term 'instrumental' reasoning? To some, this seems like a significant problem for a theory of morality, and they therefore expend significant energy on construing Aristotle's comments in ways that avoid this consequence. The tactic we will consider here is the attempt to offer an interpretation of deliberation on which it does not realize ends only 'instrumentally', but rather constitutes, specifies, or instantiates them.¹⁴⁰ It is common to hinge this interpretation on a reading of the Greek phrase

¹³⁷ *EN* VI.9.1142b15-30 adds to this standard of assessment of deliberation that it be done in an adequate length of time and without mistaken reasonings or evaluations of the situation which accidentally nonetheless lead to right choices.

¹³⁸ For some of the crucial passages in which Aristotle emphasizes the need for experience with and perception of concrete facts, see *EN* I.3, VI.7.1141b15-20, 8.1142a10-25, 11.1143a25-1143b10. We return to them below.

¹³⁹ Moss (2012, pp.157-158) cites an array of such commentators, noting that their anxieties are often traceable more to Kantian concerns with 'Humean' rationality than mere interpretation of Aristotle.

¹⁴⁰ Moss (2012 pp.196-197) traces this view to Wiggins, McDowell and Irwin, but versions of it are also found in Moss herself (2012, pp 191-198), Nussbaum (1986, pg.297), Achtenberg (2002, pp. 179-182, 151-156), and,

Aristotle uses to describe the object(s) of deliberation: τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη.¹⁴¹ This phrase is now standardly translated as ‘what contributes to end(s)’, ‘what leads to the end(s)’, ‘what promotes the end(s)’, or ‘what forwards the end(s)’, rather than ‘the means to the end(s)’. For to contribute to something, to be ‘for something’ (πρὸς τι) does not mean merely to lead to something, as an action might lead to a result that is fully specified in advance of the action and not altered in principle by the form the action takes.

To understand the other possible relationship between contributing factors and ends we have in mind, it is perhaps easiest to begin from the idea of the so-called ‘practical syllogism’. According to Aristotle the structure of a process of deliberate choice can be understood as akin to a syllogism, in which the goal or end, the principle or starting-point of deliberation, resembles a universal premise, and the action chosen as contributing to that end resembles the minor or particular premise.¹⁴² Thus one might think ‘courageous action is a good’, and - after a process of surveying one’s options and limiting circumstances - also think ‘this (particular action of war in my power) amounts to courage’, and therefore choose that action.

For our purposes, the important thing to note is that the relationship of the minor premise to the major premise is one of ‘instantiation’ or ‘constitution’; it says, ‘this is what is means to be courageous at this time and place’. It does not say ‘this action is what leads to an action defined as courageous in advance’. The general ‘goal’ of acting courageously admits of several possible determinations or expressions in different situations, and deliberation seeks the one that will actually be courageous in this case, what courage ‘amounts to’ in this case.

before these debates, Aubenque (1963, pp.51-63).

¹⁴¹ *EN* III.3.1112b10, 30, VI.12.1144a5; *MM* 17.1189a5, 18.1190a1-5, 15; *EE* II.10.1226a5, 1226b15, 1227a10-15, 11.1227b20, 30-35. Aristotle occasionally uses the clearly synonymous expressions τὰ πρὸς τὸν σκοπὸν συντείνοντα, or τῶν εἰς τὸ τέλος τεινόντων ‘what tends towards the aim/end’, e.g. *EN* VI.12.1144a20-25; *EE* II.10.1226b10.

¹⁴² Some relevant texts concerning the various elements of the so-called practical syllogism are: *EN* VI.5.1140b15, 7.1141b15, 8.1142a10-25, 9.1142b20, 11.1143a24-1143b5, VII.3.1147a25-1147b1.

This is a significant part of what it means to say that deliberation ‘constitutes’, ‘specifies’ or ‘instantiates’ a pre-given but general end in a specific situation. All the interpreters we consider in this chapter accept that Aristotelian deliberation includes something like this and is not limited to the purely strategic selection of means that bring about a pre-defined end.

Section 2: Deliberative Constitution and the Principles of Ethics; the Interpretation of Nussbaum

All the interpreters we are considering therefore agree that deliberation is a type of thinking that tries to identify the action(s) in our power which constitute(s) or achieve(s) some pre-defined but relatively general ends, and that in doing so it must rely on experience with particulars and not on mere rules. If we want to be more precise than this, however, we encounter disagreement. And we do want more precision. What are the ends of action? How do they guide deliberation? What does it mean to instantiate or achieve them?

Certain basic features of the end of ethical deliberation are relatively uncontroversial. Aristotle consistently distinguishes truly ethical or political deliberation from the deliberation found in the specific arts of, for example, navigation, generalship, and medicine. In the case of the special arts the end is a specific and relatively limited goal (victory in battle, a safe voyage, health). In ethical and political deliberation properly so-called, it is the good for oneself and others simply and without qualification, merely as human beings, rather than as soldiers, organisms, or travelers.¹⁴³ In other words, it is happiness (εὐδαιμονία). Aristotle understands happiness as an end which is intrinsically choice-worthy, complete, and self-sufficient for a human being – an end whose pursuit constitutes, includes, organizes, and rules the pursuit of

¹⁴³ EN VI.5.1140a25, 7.1141b10, 9.1142b25-30.

all other ends.¹⁴⁴ He cites several competing conceptions of this end, ruling several different types of 'lives'. These are the lives of pleasure, of honor, and of excellence (and within this last the lives of practical and theoretical excellence).¹⁴⁵

More controversial is the question of the precise scope of deliberation's efforts to 'constitute' actions which instantiate the end of action and, conversely, the precise scope of what is assumed about that end before deliberation. It is agreed by all that pursuing happiness is not up to deliberation; Aristotle is absolutely decided that every person seeks happiness by default, as it were.¹⁴⁶ But some interpreters would stop here and claim that the rest of what concerns action is up to deliberation.¹⁴⁷ Deliberation (and its perfection in prudence) decides not only which action is to be done in a particular situation (as all agree) but also the specific nature of happiness (whether it is pleasure, wealth, or excellence) and perhaps even which excellences to recognize. Others protest that the scope of deliberation is limited to the choice of specific actions in specific situations and that the specific natures of happiness and of excellence are assumed prior to deliberation, given by the agent's pre-rational character tendencies.¹⁴⁸ My own view tends towards the latter thesis: not only the general goal of happiness, but also the specific natures of happiness and (the) excellence(s) are assumed prior to deliberation, which (when guided by a concern for excellence) decides only which specific

¹⁴⁴ *EN* I.1-2, 4.1095a15, 7.1097a15-1097b20.

¹⁴⁵ *EN* I.5.

¹⁴⁶ *EN* I.4.1095a15-25.

¹⁴⁷ Jessica Moss (2012, pp.196-197) mentions Wiggins, McDowell and Irwin here. We would add Nussbaum (1986, pg. 297), who we take to represent this tendency below. It is more difficult to discern Achtenberg's view - she seems to be an intellectualist in that she thinks *voûς* grasps the ends but seems also to limit the scope of constitution to particular actions 'as' good or bad (2002, pp. 179-182, 151-156).

¹⁴⁸ For an effective summary of why the expansive view of 'constitutive' deliberation is intolerable, see Moss (2012, pp. 196-197). I repeat some of her arguments in this, and especially the next chapter. Moss herself is not very firm on the question of whether the 'choice' between the philosophical and the political life is a subject of deliberation, leaning towards yes but leaving the question open (2012, pg. 197, esp. n. 100, pp. 231-233). I reach a similar conclusion at the end of Chapter III, specifying that I wonder more whether these 'choices' are up to *wish*.

action, of those immediately available, is most excellent and happy. Much of the present chapter is concerned with outlining this account of how deliberation (and especially prudence) assumes a general view of happiness and excellence and works to instantiate it as best it can in a particular situation and action. The idea is to explain what it means to say that an action is chosen as good according to an assumed standard of value, namely the nature of happiness and excellence. This is especially the goal of Section 4.

We must also note, however, that the question of how to interpret the deliberative constitution of actions as good and contributing to happiness touches on complex and controversial questions concerning the principles of ethics in Aristotle. The question of what is the pre-deliberative idea of happiness and how deliberation unfolds, applies or instantiates it is related to the question of what is the (and indeed, whether there is any) metaphysical relationship between the principles of action and the decisions that unfold, apply, or instantiate those principles. Is the relationship between ‘happiness’, excellence, and the various excellent actions underwritten in the very nature of reality as holding goods?¹⁴⁹ In recent English-language scholarship, opinions have been divided on the question of whether and how metaphysics supplies the principles of ethics and how these principles operate in evaluating actions. On the one hand there are those who want to ‘naturalize’ Aristotelian ethics.¹⁵⁰ These writers claim that in Aristotle definite scientific ideas about human nature ground and support prudent choice of what is good for human beings. On the other hand there are those who think this concern with the ‘scientific’ foundations of ethics is an anachronism.¹⁵¹ For these writers,

¹⁴⁹ This qualification makes it clear that I am using ‘metaphysics’ in a broader sense than Aristotle, a sense which includes many of his scientific works and their use of teleological explanations of nature. This leads to ambiguity when I wish to speak of ‘metaphysics’ in the precise Aristotelian sense of ‘first philosophy’, as at points in sections 3b and 5.

¹⁵⁰ Williams (1985), Annas (1993), Foot (2001), MacIntyre (1981).

¹⁵¹ McDowell (1998), Nussbaum (1986, 1995), among others. For a brief and representative criticism of the naturalizing approach, see McDowell’s *Mind and World* (1994, pp. 78-80).

ethics and prudence form judgements about human value independently from any metaphysical principles. More recently, Deborah Achtenberg (2002) has offered an interpretation which avoids the excesses of each camp and with which we agree in most respects. For Achtenberg, Aristotle does not try to ‘ground’ our every value judgement in an independent set of natural, scientific facts about human beings and their interests. But neither does he let our human sense of value remain just that, without further foundations. For Achtenberg, Aristotelian sciences grasp the *general* real structure of the goods human beings pursue and grasp dialectically in ethics and deliberation. We will return to her interpretation in the next section.

A particular author’s response to one of these questions (that of the metaphysical grounds of deliberation and the precise scope of constitution) does not necessarily determine their response to the other. But there are affinities and tensions between certain forms of certain of these positions. In this chapter, we offer arguments for a revised version of Achtenberg’s metaphysical interpretation of the principles of deliberation and begin to argue for the limited interpretation of the constitutive role of deliberation advocated by Moss. We take Martha Nussbaum as our interlocutor because she tends to hold the converse of both these views. For Nussbaum, as we shall see immediately, εὐδαιμονία is not defined metaphysically, and its constituents and particular manifestations cannot be derived by deliberation or any other rational thought from such a metaphysical definition or any other principle. This goes hand in hand with a strongly autonomous role for ‘practical wisdom’ (φρόνησις), which supplies very nearly all the concrete content of the good life. In the remainder of this section, we sketch Nussbaum’s view. In the next two sections we question both of its elements. In Section 3 we draw on and modify Achtenberg’s metaphysical interpretation of ethical principles to suggest that there is in fact a metaphysically supported definition of εὐδαιμονία. In Section 4 we begin

to demonstrate that the role of deliberation and its perfection in φρόνησις, which we prefer to translate as prudence, is limited precisely to recognizing the best possible particular instantiation of this principle (a demonstration completed in Chapter III, which treats the inverse side of prudent choice which provides its principles, namely habitual excellence).

Nussbaum then argues that the Aristotelian concept of εὐδαιμονία is not and cannot be metaphysically grounded, and that therefore there is no theoretically specifiable relationship between it and its constituents whereby the latter are defined as good or bad and courses of deliberation as correct or incorrect. The ‘practical wisdom’ (φρόνησις) that makes decisions does so *autonomously* in each practical situation, using any universal or general statements of value only as guidelines.

Nussbaum reaches this thesis by claiming that any appeal to definite metaphysical principles as standards of the correctness of judgements of value is incoherent with three major tendencies in Aristotle’s ethical thought. These tendencies are the anthropocentricity, pluralism, and particularism in Aristotle’s concept of the good. We will review them individually, explaining briefly why Nussbaum thinks they are incompatible with metaphysical approaches to defining value, and how they support her thesis of the radical autonomy of practical wisdom. Firstly, the good life is the good life for human beings, and depends on a human perspective for its definition.¹⁵² Metaphysics – as exemplified by the thought of Plato on the Idea of Good – tends to define good by a single standard which is by definition not relative to the perspective and constitution of each species. In this sense, Aristotle’s approach to ethics does not take metaphysical claims about *the* good as its principle(s), as illustrated by Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6 critique of the Idea of Good. Rather, εὐδαιμονία is a

¹⁵² 1986, pp.291-294, 374-375; 1995, esp. 110-120.

specifically human standard of value, available only from a human perspective on what we judge to be valuable for a human life.

Secondly, Aristotle recognizes an irreducible and inclusive pluralism in the human perspective on what has value.¹⁵³ εὐδαιμονία is a broad concept including several goods as constitutive parts. The several goods – honor, wealth, good fortune generally, friendship, the various excellences, θεωρία - all differ in definition. To say that they are all included in the concept of happiness is neither to single out any one or several of them (for example θεωρία) as the key parts of happiness, with the others as subordinate parts, nor is it to identify happiness with some further term, e.g. ‘pleasure’, which they all produce in different ways and degrees. εὐδαιμονία is some sufficient combination of these goods such that a life starts to flourish, and they are all necessary constituent parts of a flourishing life. As a result, decision-making cannot be an exact calculus of the degree of happiness individual actions and priorities involve. Rather, it must involve an autonomous grasp of the unique nature of each individual good, and their contributions to a flourishing life constituted by them all.

This last point converges with the third and final element of Aristotle’s thought which Nussbaum claims is incompatible with the use of metaphysical definitions of value in ethics. Analytic ethicists writing in the wake of John McDowell have called it his ‘particularism’.¹⁵⁴ The point begins from the well-recognized fact that Aristotle does not think that universal rules are sufficient bases for practical judgements of the value of *particulars*. As we have seen, individual situations fluctuate in their details so widely that it can rarely, if ever, be specified in advance which definite action actually manifests a particular virtue. What is courageous in one situation will be cowardly or foolhardy in another, a just resolution in one case will be

¹⁵³ 1986, pp. 294-297.

¹⁵⁴ See Hooker and Little, 2000, especially Irwin (2000, pp. 100-104).

indulgent in another.

Nussbaum interprets this point to mean that no universal statements of value can possibly be metaphysical standards of the value of particular actions, or in other words necessary and sufficient definitions of good action. Any universal statement of a principle of value must fail to capture the complexity and variance inherent to real practical situations and is therefore in constant need of modification and qualification if it is to help define right actions.¹⁵⁵ The faculty that does this ‘modifying’ work is φρόνησις. Because φρόνησις modifies and qualifies the rules, and in fact can always add new rules, it cannot rely on rules in its judgement in any foundational sense. On the contrary, it must rely on a grasp of the ethically relevant features of individual situations that is in principle autonomous from rules. Rather than being standards by which the correctness of practical judgement is assessed, rules are summaries of previous practical judgements. They are useful guidelines by which the φρόνιμος can recognize and summarize similarities between concrete situations and actions, but the real grounds of his judgement lie in his autonomous and perceptual appraisal of those situations and actions themselves.

¹⁵⁵ 1986, pp. 298-306.

Section 3: The Basic Elements of Aristotle's Metaphysics of Ends

A) The Analogical Principle Introduced; Nussbaum's Argument from Particularism Refuted

These, then, are Nussbaum's arguments for the autonomy of practical thought and choice relative to any scientific definitions of good. Such definitions are incompatible with Aristotle's commitments to the anthropocentricity, pluralism, and particularity of the good. These arguments excuse her from offering a precise statement of how universal principles interact with the perception and experience of particulars in deliberation's efforts to identify good actions, and generally of what the scope of deliberation is in constituting the good. Nussbaum tends to assume that 'practical wisdom' is completely autonomous and constitutes all its own principles, as the natural inverse of the thought that (some of) these principles are somehow pre-determined in reality. If we have contrary reasons to believe that there *is* some metaphysical standard of value in Aristotle that coheres with his so-called anthropocentrism, pluralism, and particularism in ethics, we have the right to ask for a more substantial account of how far prudence goes in constituting what is good and in what ways it might be limited in advance by metaphysical principles. In this section we will suggest that there is in fact such a metaphysics in Aristotle. In Section 4 we will begin to indicate how it makes sense of deliberation.

Deborah Achtenberg has already argued for this thesis. She argues that in Aristotle the use of terms indicating the value of beings, such as 'the good' (τὸ ἀγαθόν), 'the noble' (τὸ καλόν), 'the end' (τὸ τέλος), or 'characteristic activity' (ἔργον, ἐνέργεια) reveal a metaphysical principle of value at work. This principle is the fulfillment or completion (τελειώσις) of natures in activities pursued within 'enriching limitations' (τέλῃ), limitations which help them be what

they are rather than damaging them.¹⁵⁶ Achtenberg also tries to show that this principle is consistent with Aristotle's concept of the imprecision of ethics and his antipathy to fixed rules in decision making. Her efforts here point out how her arguments can help us respond to Nussbaum's.

The basic point to stress about Achtenberg's principle of value is that it is what she calls a *universal equivocal analogical principle*.¹⁵⁷ In the claim of equivocality, she agrees entirely with Nussbaum. As we have seen, Aristotle claims that the term 'good' means something different depending on which species, or even which human activity, it is applied to.¹⁵⁸ Human beings, fish and gods are substantially different creatures with very different capacities and requirements, and their goods must be accordingly different. Medicine, politics, carpentry, navigation, generalship, and in short all the arts, have different goals and methods for achieving them. Justice, temperance and all the other excellences have different domains of objects and demands, and actions of a very different and even opposing nature can in different situations satisfy the same excellence.

Part of the difference between Nussbaum and Achtenberg can be explained as follows. Nussbaum lays emphasis on this equivocality in the meaning of 'good' to the point of arguing that it must be overlooked by any universal and rigid definition of good(s). Achtenberg, however, proposes a way of unifying the term 'good' without overlooking its equivocality. She brings our attention to the following passage, in the middle of the *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6 critique of the univocal, Platonic idea of the good:

But then in what way are things called good? For they do not seem to be like the things that only chance to have the same name. Are goods one, then, by being derived from one good or

¹⁵⁶ Achtenberg's argument is thorough enough in its textual support that we can only indicate its major conclusions here, with minimal textual support. The interested reader should consult the major part of her book for more detail (2002, pp. 44-122).

¹⁵⁷ For Achtenberg's initial statement of this idea, see 2002, pp.44-58.

¹⁵⁸ EN I.6.1096b20-30, VI.7.1141a20-30.

by all contributing to one good (συντελεῖν πρὸς ἓν), or are they rather one by analogy? For as sight is in the body, so is reason (νοῦς) in the soul. But perhaps these subjects had better be dismissed for the present; for perfect precision about them would be more appropriate to another branch of philosophy.¹⁵⁹

Aristotle clearly thinks that there is some sort of unity to the term. In her interpretation of this passage Achtenberg argues that the ‘other branch of philosophy’ is metaphysics, and that Aristotle prefers the analogical interpretation of the unity of ‘good’.¹⁶⁰ She argues that the principle she has identified (that the good means to flourish in the completion of nature within constitutive limits) relates all uses of the term by analogy to one another.

We can recognize her basic point rather quickly in returning to the instances of equivocality we cited just now. Despite the obvious differences between human beings and fish, and what it means for each to flourish, each is nonetheless an animal with characteristic needs and activities. Each must also perform those activities and satisfy those needs within the limits proper to its nature. For example, men live in cities which allow them to flourish, and fish in schools on riverbanks, etc. What cities and politics are to men, riverbank schools and their familial and group activities are to fish. This is an analogy with reference to the idea of the flourishing of a specific nature within constitutive limits. Likewise in the case of human arts: medicine and politics, for example, have different goals and standards of evaluation, corresponding to the different natures and needs of the human body and the human soul. And yet the goal of health and the techniques that achieve it can be fruitfully compared to politics and its goal of excellence and a society ruled on the principle of excellence – what bodily health and prescription are in medicine, excellence and good laws are in politics. This is an analogy (one that became a *topos* in antiquity) with reference to the idea of what completes the

¹⁵⁹ EN I.6.1096b25.

¹⁶⁰ 2002, pg. 46. We will discuss some slight passages from the metaphysics further on. For now we can note that our eventual addition of the idea of *hierarchy* to that of analogy suggests that Aristotle also perhaps favors some version of the interpretation of ‘good’ as ‘contributing to one good’.

nature of the object of each art.¹⁶¹

Achtenberg's suggestion handily rebuts Nussbaum's protestations against metaphysics *simpliciter* by showing that only *univocal* metaphysics is in principle at fault. In particular it seems a good match for her argument from particularism. The reader will remember Nussbaum's argument: the sheer (and even self-contradictory) variety of actions that can satisfy the demands of each of the excellences in different situations means that no rule can authoritatively define right action. Achtenberg has taken pains to show that her analogical principle of value is in fact compatible with the situational variety of right action.¹⁶² This is because the relationship between equivocality and analogy we have been discussing extends right down to the level of the differences among individual actions and their unity in manifesting one excellence.

Take the example of retreating and attacking as manifestations of courage in war. Each maneuver is aimed at the goal of victory, one of the principal ends defining the objective sphere of courage.¹⁶³ Which sort of maneuver is the best option cannot be determined in advance by a fixed rule like 'attack whenever you can'. It is rather dependent on the concrete contexts which define the situation. These contexts change the value of any given action described in the abstract, like 'attack' or 'retreat'. What is courageous in a situation of military advantage can easily become rash in a position of disadvantage. Many other qualifications apply for the

¹⁶¹ The reader may find it odd that we emphasize Nussbaum's difference from Achtenberg on this point, since already in 1995 and especially later in her 'capabilities approach' to ethics (e.g. 2011, chapter 2) she defends Aristotelian ideas about human flourishing. However, she emphasizes that her idea of human flourishing is developed by reference to the human sense of or perspective on flourishing, *not* by a scientific theory of the human substance. Whatever the philosophical merits of this approach, this is where we see its difference from Achtenberg and from Aristotle. We can in addition wonder - with Bernard Williams (1985) - about the justification of such an approach *independent* of strong assumptions about human nature or the structure of substances.

¹⁶² In her lengthy and thorough interpretation of the doctrine of the mean. (2002, pp 97-122, especially 109-114)

¹⁶³ In Section 2.4 we shall define the objective sphere and goals of courage with more nuance.

various contextual elements and their practically infinite possible variations. And yet all these possibilities are unified as contributing to the characteristic object of courageous action. What retreating is in a situation of certain and useless defeat, standing one's ground is in a situation of possible defeat that holds the lines for a parallel maneuver; this, again, is an analogy with reference to what completes a very specific task within a very specific context, but in each case a task and completion proper to the domain of the excellence of courage.

The idea is that each of the individual excellences can be interpreted in this way. Further, the manifestations of the different excellences in different actions adjusted to meet different contextual requirements can themselves be compared to one another analogically. Thus, what due restraint in a situation of military disadvantage is to courage in war, restrained spending in a time of unusual financial hardship is to liberality; what the proper enjoyment of a hearty meal is to temperance, the readiness to make a tasteful jest is to good humor. One of the major merits of Achtenberg's interpretation is that by such examples as these she sheds significant light on Aristotle's principled statement of the rule of the intermediate: to do what is right or needed ($\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$), in the way and to whom it is right or needed, to the degree that is right or needed, at the opportune moment ($\delta\ \kappa\alpha\tilde{\iota}\rho\omicron\varsigma$).¹⁶⁴ Far from being a counsel to mediocrity, an unhelpful tautology, or a merely heuristic device, this principle summarizes the analogical relationships that obtain between the various manifestations of the several excellences in their proper domains.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ 2002, pp. 115-122. This formulation is first introduced at *EN* II.6.1106b15-25 but forms a constant refrain throughout the several treatments of the specific excellences.

¹⁶⁵ For the idea of mediocrity, see 2002, pp. 98-100. For tautology, pp. 110. For the idea that the mean is a heuristic device, pp. 97-98 (Achtenberg attributes the idea to Nancy Sherman but could have traced it to Nussbaum's idea that the 'rules' of prudence are helpful summaries). It is part of Achtenberg's argument to show that the terms $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ and $\delta\ \kappa\alpha\tilde{\iota}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ are related systematically to the metaphysics of value she finds in Aristotle. We can note in this context that her arguments can be paired nicely with Pierre Aubenque's remark (1963, pp. 36-39) that each excellence is defined by reference to a characteristic domain of objects, made use of in the body of our text. Aristotle's consistent method is to identify that domain of objects, actions and feelings, to state the general

Achtenberg has therefore effectively met Nussbaum's general claim that the equivocality of the good in Aristotle makes all metaphysical principles of value untenable, by showing that an analogical principle of value is at work in Aristotle and is consistent with this equivocality. Her argument is particularly successful in the case of Nussbaum's argument from Aristotle's 'particularism': this analogical principle of value is coherent with and actually explains the variability in the idea of right action exhibited in Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. In the next sub-section (B), however, we will show that Achtenberg cannot respond to Nussbaum's arguments from anthropocentricity and pluralism until her principle of value is amended to include a *hierarchical* metaphysics that accommodates for these specific forms of equivocality, and we will briefly suggest a path to this amendment. The result is a provisional understanding of the metaphysics of the ends of deliberation.

B) The Concept of Hierarchy in Aristotle's Metaphysics and Ethics; Nussbaum's Arguments from Anthropocentrism and Pluralism Refuted

As we have described it, Achtenberg's analogical principle of value is general and flexible enough to extend to any goal-oriented activity that has a specific nature. We might therefore think that it shows, *contra* Nussbaum, that metaphysical principles of value are coherent with the anthropocentrism and pluralism evident in Aristotle's account of εὐδαιμονία. In a sense we would be right. Achtenberg has suggested convincingly that there is in Aristotle a metaphysical idea of 'good' which helps us understand its equivocal uses in designating the flourishing of human beings, fishes and the several arts and excellences, without destroying their specific natures.

analogical principle of the mean, and to give some context-dependent examples of its satisfaction (the specific terms related to one another analogically).

When we look closer, however, we find that this resolution of the equivocality of ‘good’ is too general to respond to Nussbaum’s arguments from anthropocentrism and pluralism. For when these arguments are studied closely, it is clear that they are motivated against not just any unity in the idea of value, but especially against any unity that establishes hierarchical relationships between the different meanings of the term ‘good’. An effective response to these arguments must show that the hierarchical metaphysics of which there are clear traces in Aristotle is consistent with the anthropocentric and pluralistic tendencies in his thought about εὐδαιμονία. Achtenberg’s principle cannot do so in its current form, but it provides the basis of such a response.

The clearest path into this problem is to note that the anthropocentric and pluralistic tendency is not as dominant in Aristotle as Nussbaum sometimes suggests.¹⁶⁶ Aristotle repeatedly places the types of human happiness on a hierarchical scale, with contemplative activity and the contemplative life qualifying as most truly happy, and the ‘political’ life and activity being subordinated and even instrumental to it.¹⁶⁷ He also shows a tendency to extend this hierarchical concept of ‘happiness’ beyond the realm of the human, claiming that the divine principle is most happy or blessed. And these claims are related. God is most happy because it is always contemplating, and contemplation is the highest human happiness at least in part because it most resembles God.¹⁶⁸

Nussbaum claims that these metaphysical, hierarchical passages are in conflict with certain others of Aristotle’s statements, which indicate a commitment to anthropocentrism and

¹⁶⁶ Nussbaum’s great moment of honesty on this point is found in the appendix on ‘human and divine’ (1986, pp. 373-377).

¹⁶⁷ This is especially clear in *EN* X.7-8. But see also the teleological direction of human value and society in *Meta*.I.1-2.

¹⁶⁸ For both these claims, see especially *EN* X.7.1177a15, 1177b25-1178a5, 8.1178b5-20; *EN* VI.1141a30-1141b5; *Meta*.I.2.982b30-98310; XII.7 as a whole.

pluralistic holism in his thought about happiness. In *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6, as we have seen, he insists that Plato's attempt to define the good of each species and activity by reference to 'the good itself' fails to grasp what is unique in their definitions. And in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, he explicitly begins his philosophical definition of human happiness by relativizing the term 'good' to the specific function of a species, and thus the term 'human good' to the function of the human species.¹⁶⁹ Further, in several places he argues that human nature is such that happiness depends on fortune, political organization, and friendship.¹⁷⁰ And it seems that this dependence is not merely instrumental to the end of contemplation, but is rather the dependence of a whole on one of its constituent features; material, practical and political life is an inherent part of human nature and εὐδαιμονία.¹⁷¹

The conflict Nussbaum alleges holds between these sets of passages is roughly as follows. To identify 'the good' most truly with one facet of human activity, or with an activity that is beyond human limitations, is to devalue other activities and disregard specific characteristics of human nature and happiness. To say that God's contemplative activity is the good for human beings is impossible without defining human beings as gods, effectively destroying their natures and the possibility of their happiness. To define philosophy as 'the good' simply, and as better than political activity, which is a mere means toward it, discounts that political activity is an inherent constituent of any human happiness because of human nature's active and social elements. These claims represent a regression away from the pluralism and anthropocentrism that distinguishes Aristotle's ethics from Plato's blustering

¹⁶⁹ *EN* I.7.1097b20-1098a15.

¹⁷⁰ *EN* I.7.1097b5-10, 8.1099a30-1099b5, VIII.1.1154b1-30; *Pol.* I.2, esp. 1253a1-35. Nussbaum helpfully adds (1986, pg. 376, item 8) that several passages go as far as to claim that the life of a god is unsuited to men.

¹⁷¹ Thus the *Politics* passage cited above states clearly that the state is a whole of which a man is a part (1253a20-35), the *EN* VIII passage emphasizes that friendship is not merely necessary but also noble (1154b25-30), and the goods of fortune emphasized in *EN* I are emphasized clearly as promoting all flourishing activity (including practical activity) as noble and intrinsically valuable.

rhetoric of the self-sufficiency and quasi-divinity of the philosophical life, its superiority over all other modes of existence, and its accession to an absolute, species-neutral realm of values.

Although Nussbaum does articulate a general opposition to the relevance of univocal metaphysical definitions to ethics, we can therefore see that her arguments are mounted especially against setting up hierarchies of value among essentially different species and activities. To this extent, Achtenberg's replacement of univocal metaphysics by an analogical principle of value is not an entirely sufficient response. For Achtenberg's analogical principle of the unity of equivocal concepts of value does not set up a hierarchical order among the various terms it unifies.¹⁷² Because of this fact, it fails to explain how Aristotle could claim the superiority of philosophy to politics, or God to human beings. In fact, Achtenberg's principle seems entirely consistent with Nussbaum's pluralism and anthropocentrism. Because the unity by analogy proposed by Achtenberg does not order its various terms into a hierarchy, it suggests that they are incomparable except by the general idea that each of their 'fulfillments' completes a radically unique nature.

If Achtenberg's work is to form the basis of a reply to Nussbaum's concerns about the coherence of a metaphysics of value with Aristotle's anthropocentrism and pluralism, a hierarchical element must be added to it. It must be shown that the different instantiations of Achtenberg's principle of 'good' as 'natural completion' are related to one another not only by analogical comparison, but also as *more or less eminent or complete* instantiations of this principle, without destroying each of their specific and individual natures. We will now sketch

¹⁷² Achtenberg at least implicitly recognizes this herself when she states at the end of her book (2002, pp. 189-190) that she is critical of the hierarchical way in which Aristotle has developed the idea of the analogy of good. She does not seem to realize that by failing to emphasize this hierarchical development in her exposition of Aristotle's idea, she has let her own critical perspective distort his intentions somewhat.

a possible route for this addition.¹⁷³

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle recognizes ‘being’ (τὸ ὄν) as a term that is said in many ways, with different applications across different species and categories.¹⁷⁴ He resolves this equivocality by referring all meanings of ‘being’ in diverse ways to the primary meaning of *substance* (οὐσία).¹⁷⁵ Every use of the term ‘is’ and its derivatives refers to a substance or one of its properties, affections, relations, etc. This is the doctrine of the analogy of being. The primary signification, substance, is in turn interpreted as meaning most primarily the form or essence, especially understood as activity (ἔργον, ἐνεργεία).¹⁷⁶ This prepares the way for the proof of the necessary and eternal existence of a divine principle – entirely active, immaterial, only being – which is substance in the truest sense and sustains the existence of all substance.¹⁷⁷ Every substance exists by being drawn toward this one most true substance in loving imitation of its substantial form, and all use of the term ‘being’ refers ultimately to this principle as its primary meaning.

One of the advantages of Achtenberg’s proposal that all uses of the term ‘good’ are unified by reference to the idea of the completion of substantially defining activities is that it exactly parallels the initial stages of this resolution of the equivocality of being. And this seems to cohere with the texts about the specificity of human happiness that Nussbaum cites. The human good is defined by reference to the activity that characterizes human substance, and the

¹⁷³ To fully defend this interpretation is beyond the scope of our essay. We are more interested in showing that it is possible and plausible, in order to establish a standing idea of the metaphysical structure of the ends of life and deliberation in a way that is more coherent with the philosophical spirit revealed by this aspect of Aristotle’s texts than both Nussbaum’s and Achtenberg’s.

¹⁷⁴ *Meta*.IV.2, V.7.

¹⁷⁵ *Meta*.IV.2.1103b5-10, VII.1.1028a10

¹⁷⁶ This is potentially controversial. Nussbaum, for example, would emphasize that substances are strictly individual composites (1978, pp. 68-69). Our point depends on a reading of the general tendencies of *Metaphysics* VII-IX that we cannot defend fully here: even though any individual composite substance still is material and a ‘this’, *what* it is, and what fulfills it, is defined by the essential form, which is prior in being as well as generation, and is in this sense the true substance.

¹⁷⁷ *Meta*.XII, especially XII.7 for the conclusions.

goods of fortune, the various arts, and even the several excellences as dispositions, are subordinated and referred to the good of human substance defined as rational and rationally guided activity.¹⁷⁸ We can now point out, though, that the other set of passages, on the hierarchy of happiness in the human and divine realms, show evidence of an analogy of good which parallels the *theological* stage in the analogy of being.

Aristotle does not simply define the human being as rational and happiness as rational activity and leave it at that. Rather, he thinks that the human being is composite and exhibits two kinds of rational activity: thinking, which is rational in itself, and the rational guidance of feeling and acting.¹⁷⁹ This division spawns the two types of human excellence and happiness – rational practical activity (politics) and contemplation.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, his preference for contemplative activity as being more of the nature of happiness reflects his claim that the activity of mere thought is what most properly distinguishes the human being, because it is most properly rational.¹⁸¹ And this view appears to parallel the metaphysical view that the form or essence itself, rather than the composite of form and matter, is the truest nature of substance. Just as a pure definition ‘is’ more precisely and truly what a thing is than that definition ‘in’ a definite material, so ‘rationality’ rather than ‘rationality in action and feeling’ is more properly what defines the human being’s substance.¹⁸² If ‘good’ is a term whose primary reference is to

¹⁷⁸ The principal text is of course *EN* I.7, but see also *EN* I.1-2, in which the subordination of the arts to excellence and politics is clear, and *EN* I.9, in which fortune is to a great extent subordinated to its excellent use. Even though her account relies heavily on the concept of the flourishing of substances, Achtenberg is here not as clear as we might like on the relation of various human activities to the expression of *human* substance.

¹⁷⁹ *EN* I.13, VI.1-2.1139a1-30; *DA* 10.433a10-20.

¹⁸⁰ *EN* I.13, VI.1-2, X.7.

¹⁸¹ *EN* I.7.1098a15, X.7.1177a10-15, 1178a1-5.

¹⁸² The passage on contemplative rationality which most clearly reflects this is *DA* III.4 as a whole, where it is argued that thought is immaterial and simple, with explicit contrast to the classic example of a composite substance from the *Metaphysics*, the ‘snub-nosed’ (429b10-20). See also the claim at *EN* X.8.1178a20 that the excellence of the intellect is a thing apart (and not composite). The view seems also to be implied in Aristotle’s frequent definitions of this part of the soul as ‘only thinking’ and its good being ‘only truth’ and thus more ‘simply’ and ‘in itself’ rational (e.g. *EN* VI.1139a25-30, I.13.1102b10-30, X.8.1178b20, etc.).

substance, it would appear that human good refers most properly to pure thinking.

These abstract distinctions are developed more concretely in the texts we cited earlier on the hierarchy of happiness. There Aristotle describes the relationship between politics (non-technical practical activity generally) and contemplation roughly as follows.¹⁸³ Politics seeks to achieve the good in material reality, organization and action (it is *composite*). As a result, it provides things that are materially needed, responds to instrumental concerns, is always to some extent aimed at things useful, and requires lots of external support to be done correctly. On the other hand, philosophy is *eminently* leisurely, arises only when all material needs are met, aims at nothing other than understanding, and does not depend on much at all once basic needs are provided. It is more ‘simple’, self-contained and self-sufficient. In this sense we can understand it as more purely ‘substantial’ than politics and therefore more ‘happy’ and ‘complete’ in itself.

Likewise, just as in the metaphysics substance as essence was referred most properly to God’s activity, so here too the degrees of happiness in the human realm are ultimately degrees of resemblance to God’s contemplative activity.¹⁸⁴ God’s activity of contemplation is described by Aristotle as being the completely uninterrupted and perfect knowledge of the highest cause and principle, which is the thought of itself. This is completely substantial activity, unchanging, always fully what it is. Human contemplation is described as being a very incomplete, intermittent and imperfect access to that very same object.¹⁸⁵ It requires the long work of dialectical reasoning as well as freedom from material necessities in an adequate kind

¹⁸³ Here we draw particularly on *EN* X.7.1177a20-1177b20, 8.1178a10-1178b1; *Meta*.I.1.981b15-20.

¹⁸⁴ For the claims about God’s activity, see *Meta*.XII.7.

¹⁸⁵ *Meta*.XII.7.1072b20, I.2.982b30-983a5; *EN* X.7.1177b25-30, 8.1178b20. The doctrine that intellect actually becomes the object of knowledge, from *DA* 4, 7, is relevant here and is mentioned at *Meta*.XII.7.1072b20. Note that these formulations are reminiscent of the Platonic thesis (*Phaedo* 78d-84b) that through philosophy we grasp the best objects in the cosmos with the best part of ourselves.

of leisure.¹⁸⁶ But in comparison to politics, as we have seen, it is more complete and substantial – this increased substantiality is therefore to be understood as a degree of resemblance to God.

We have therefore suggested that the hierarchy of happiness we have detected in Aristotle is a system of predication which parallels the analogy of being from the *Metaphysics*, and which applies the terms ‘good’ and ‘happy’ to an activity to the degree that it achieves the completely substantial activity of God.¹⁸⁷ Now, is this hierarchy of predication compatible with Aristotle’s anthropocentrism and pluralism? Can Aristotle assert the superiority of contemplation to politics on the grounds of its similarity to God without overlooking what is specific to human nature and the value of politics? I think so.

In the general case of the relationship of the human to the divine, the resolution should be as follows. By transcending practical and material concerns and thus making ourselves like gods, we do not actually leave human nature behind, in two ways. Firstly, the human being is of course actualizing (the best and truest) part of its nature in moments of contemplative activity.¹⁸⁸ And secondly, by recommending that we strive in this way ‘as much as possible’ (ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐνδέχεται),¹⁸⁹ Aristotle makes a nod to the real limitations of composite human nature, rather than riding roughshod over them.¹⁹⁰ The good most properly speaking can be

¹⁸⁶ The need for dialectic is evident from the definition of σοφία as ἐπιστήμη of the most valuable objects (τῶν τιμιωτάτων) combined with νοῦς (*EN* VI.7.15). The need for freedom from material need is implied by *Meta*.I.1.981b15-20.

¹⁸⁷ It should be noted and further studied that in several places Aristotle actually seems to use complex formulations that resemble this one. Thus he says that “the good and the choice-worthy in itself are in the same column [of correlative terms], and *what is first is always what is best or what is analogous to the best*” (*Meta*.XII.7.1072a30-35, emphasis added), and that “the activity of god, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplation, and of human activities, that which is *most akin* (συγγενεστάτη) to this must be most happy.” (*EN* 8.1178b20, emphasis added).

¹⁸⁸ *EN* X.7.1178a1-5.

¹⁸⁹ *EN* X.7. This formulation contains the word which appears in the phrases usually translated as ‘contingent’, offering support to Pierre Aubenque’s general characterization of human political action as the attempt to achieve as much of the divine as is allowed by the contingencies of matter (1963, pp. 77-91).

¹⁹⁰ In *EN* X.8.1178b30-1179a15 he does so again, by reaffirming that modest material comfort is necessary for the philosopher. Passages like this make it clear that his apparent defense of a solitary contemplative life is meant mostly to isolate what is most valuable, and not as an actual recommendation that philosophers become hermits

something human but also trans-human and barely within the grasp of human nature, because of our intellectual and material limitations. This tension is not a contradiction and is written into Aristotle's theory of human nature as composite and human happiness as a degree of resemblance to the divine.

The tension between political and contemplative happiness is more difficult. It is easy to see that the claim whereby contemplation is set up as the truest human happiness is coherent with a permanent instrumental value to political activity. Aristotle makes it clear that this activity is always in part a means to a further end.¹⁹¹ Included in this end are peace, law and order, leisure, and crucially the freedom to philosophize.¹⁹² It is easy to see how all these goals of politics contribute to the highest and freest use of leisure (philosophy) and can be judged valuable insofar as they contribute to it.¹⁹³ And because of the materiality and contingency of the human condition, politics will always be necessary as such a means to happiness. As Nussbaum points out, however, Aristotle does not seem to view politics as merely instrumental to contemplation. It is also an intrinsic element of happiness – excellent people enjoy the intrinsic value and noble pleasures proper to excellent actions, a well-ordered state, and noble friendships. Is this coherent with the claim that happiness in some ultimate sense is

and ascetics.

¹⁹¹ *EN* X.7.1177b5-10.

¹⁹² *EN* I.2.1094b5-10; *POL.* II.1.1260b25, VII.1-3.

¹⁹³ For the claim that political activity aims inherently at the leisure needed for contemplation, see Aristotle's insistence that war and business exist for the sake of leisure (*POL.* VII.2), and that philosophy is the best use of leisure, the most leisurely activity, and the only one that is free in itself (*Meta.* I.1.981b15-20, 2.982b10-25; *EN* X.7.1177b10-20). He states explicitly that politics rules the state for the sake of philosophy at *EN* VI.13.1145a5-10. A correlative passage from *Eudemian Ethics* states the point more bluntly and with less nuance: "whatever choice, then, or possession of the natural goods - whether bodily goods, wealth, friends, or other things - will most produce (ποιήσει μάλιστα) the contemplation of god, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard (ὁ ὅρος κάλλιστος), but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of god is base; this a man possesses in his soul and this is the best standard for the soul - to perceive the irrational part of the soul as such as little as possible." (*EE* 1249b15-20). The passage is interesting and deserves more comment, not least because it appears to define the idea of the intermediate, excess and deficiency in action by the imperative to fulfill rational nature in the contemplation of god.

contemplation? Or are we consigned to recognizing only instrumental value in politics?

I think that we can recognize politics as intrinsically valuable and a form of happiness while also claiming that contemplation is a truer happiness, and that this possibility is underwritten by Aristotle's claim that human activities are happy to the degree that they resemble the divine. We already encountered this resolution in principle when we treated the resemblance of the analogy of good to the analogy of being. We noted there that God's activity is happy to the extent that it is completely substantial, complete, and self-sustaining, and that the two major grades of happiness are happy to the extent that they are thus. And they are so to different degrees. Political activity is more dependent upon and pursuant of definite material conditions and external results, whereas contemplation occurs at the moment that we are freed from necessity, seeks nothing besides truth (ultimately equivalent with the *noetic* act that defines it), and depends on fewer external factors. This is emphatically not to say that politics is *purely* instrumental; of course, an excellent person can and does take intrinsic satisfaction in acts of excellence, in honor proportional to his merits, in the excellence of his friends and in the good and self-sufficient order of the state. The point is rather that all these goods are *more* implicated in and mixed with material necessity than is contemplation and are exactly to that extent *less* 'truly' happy. Contemplation contains more of that same character of intrinsic value that Aristotle thinks characterizes noble actions.¹⁹⁴ The intrinsic value of noble actions is not thereby overshadowed; it is simply found more purely expressed in something other than the domain in which we see it most readily.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ This helps motivate the otherwise bizarre claim of *Pol.* VII.3.1325b15-20, that contemplation is much more (πολὺ μᾶλλον) action than politics.

¹⁹⁵ Pierre Aubenque has pointed in this direction by his occasional and suggestive comment that that prudence (the ruler of the moral excellences and of political life generally) seeks, so far as possible, to approach the divine in a composite and contingent and in principle unsatisfactory material (1963, pp. 77-91). More work is needed to flesh out this claim, which we have only articulated and defended in principle. How exactly can we understand politics and the activities of the several excellences as 'lower' expressions of the quality found in purer form in

We have therefore suggested that a hierarchical interpretation of Aristotle's analogous use of the term 'good' by reference to the idea of substance makes sense of the texts on happiness and does not contradict their emphasis on anthropocentrism and pluralism. 'Happy' is a predicate that applies to the different activities of different substances to the extent that they instantiate the purely substantial activity of God. This allows for a hierarchy of degrees of happiness and divinity that does not contradict the specific natures of the species and the activities it orders. For these various natures, taken in themselves, are substantial to differing degrees and therefore admit of differing degrees of resemblance to God, different degrees of happiness. In particular, the human being can 'do everything' (πάντα ποιεῖν)¹⁹⁶ to become a god without ever ceasing to be a human being and can place its highest happiness in contemplation without contradicting the instrumental and intrinsic value of political life. The substance and characteristic activities of the human being as they are defined by Aristotle accommodate for these tensions. We therefore adopt this as our working interpretation of the metaphysical structure of the ends of deliberation.

contemplation and the god? A helpful textual starting point would be to compare Aristotle's character-sketch of ὁ μεγαλωφύχος in *EN* IV.3 and description of the god in *Meta*.XII.7. For greatness of soul is the highest manifestation of all the moral excellences in an individual, and the god's activity is the highest expression of happiness as such. The texts Nussbaum has uncovered on the *difference* between the human and the divine would be another, once it is understood that this difference is not a mere negation, but rather a dialectical one (i.e. our not-being-gods is a condition of the possibility of seeking that share of godhead which is the natural human lot – a motif first expressed rationally in Plato's *Symposium*).

¹⁹⁶ *EN* X.7.1177b30. When we compare this phrase to the one at *EN* VI.5.1140b15, which in stated that the prudent man does everything with the end of life in view, we can see what value the metaphysical view of human happiness can have for deliberation.

Section 4: The Relation Between Ends and their Instantiation in Deliberation Explained

A) The Function of Deliberative Imagination in Choice

We have then suggested that the principle of deliberation, namely happiness as excellence, admits of a rigorous definition by a universal, analogical and hierarchical metaphysics, and that this does not contradict Aristotle's anthropocentric, pluralistic, and particularist tendencies. But we recognized a second problem with the concept of deliberation and choice. What, precisely, is deliberated about and chosen and what, on the contrary, is assumed by deliberation as its principle(s)? What is the scope of deliberation's 'constitution' of 'what contributes to ends'?

We claimed that a resolution to the problem of the role of metaphysics in defining happiness, while not decisive for this problem, might help us form an answer. For happiness is on every interpretation assumed as a principle of deliberation in some form, at least as an abstract 'goal'. All interpreters agree furthermore that deliberation and choice are at least concerned with which particular action is best, and this is the primary focus of Aristotle's definition of these terms. The disagreement concerns everything in between: the nature of happiness as excellence, the two forms of happiness, and the natures of the various excellences. Are these principles assumed by deliberation, or are they 'constituted' and in some sense 'chosen' by deliberation, on the basis of prior principles?

As mentioned previously, we lean towards thinking that all these things are included in the assumptions from which deliberation begins. But we will not argue this definitively until the next chapter, where we show that this is the best way to interpret Aristotle's comments on the cognitive function of habit, which supplies the principles of deliberation. In this section, we will only offer a way of thinking about deliberation which makes this idea plausible. We

will do this by showing how our interpretation of the metaphysics of ends helps us make sense of how particular actions are found to be good ('constituted' as good) and therefore chosen on the basis of the prior assumption of just that metaphysical hierarchy of value which we sketched in the last section. This argument comes in two stages. First of all, we show deliberation to be founded in a perceptual and imaginative appraisal of possible courses of action. Secondly, we suggest that because this perception and imagination reveals actions as instantiating hierarchical principles of value, deliberation can constitute particular actions as good and bad, better and worse, *on the assumption* of such a hierarchy of value.

Now as we have indicated, it is at least one of the undisputed functions of deliberation to grasp the minor premise in the practical syllogism on the basis of which a particular action is chosen as good. This involves saying that deliberation grasps an evaluation of particular actions. If, for example, one chooses to walk because this is healthy, one has already formed the idea 'walking is healthy', and this is an evaluation of the merit of walking insofar as one also has the idea that 'health is a good'. The same applies in the case of the excellences: the two premises 'courage is an excellence and a component of happiness', and 'standing my ground here is courage', form a choice, and this is possible because the minor premise evaluates a particular action in the light of the major premise, i.e. evaluates 'standing one's ground here' in the light of the ideas of courage, excellence and happiness.¹⁹⁷

Our question is: how does deliberation grasp such evaluations of particular actions? One portion of the answer takes us on a detour through some psychological concepts. For Aristotle makes it clear at several points that particulars are the object of perception

¹⁹⁷ For two important instances of the claim that deliberation involves knowledge of particulars which simultaneously characterize this knowledge of particulars in terms of the minor premise in just this way, see *EN* 7.1141b10-15, 8.1142a20-25.

(αἴσθησις).¹⁹⁸ Some interpreters use this idea to support the claim that prudence, which provides the minor premise that evaluates actions, is a form of perception.¹⁹⁹ They are perhaps overhasty to do so, however, for prudence and deliberation appear to be forms of thought (νοῦς, even διανοία), and Aristotle contrasts this with perception as two distinct faculties of soul. Perhaps the minor premise evaluating particular actions is grasped by deliberative thought by the aid of another, non-rational cognitive mode like perception. This supposition is confirmed by some of the most recent research on Aristotle's cognitive and affective psychology. Jessica Moss (2012) in particular has argued that Aristotle implicitly uses a concept of practical perception and imagination, by which he understands pre-rational ways of appraising the value of particular objects.²⁰⁰ We cannot repeat her arguments here in much detail, but can sketch a few of their main aspects which prove most important for an understanding of deliberation and the evaluation of particular actions in the so-called minor premise of the practical syllogism.

Moss has argued at length that Aristotle recognizes a practical, evaluative form of perception of particular realities and their common properties which in turn grounds a practical, evaluative form of retaining, reproducing and synthesizing those same evaluative perceptions in φαντασίαι. The distinctive practical feature of these pre-discursive levels of evaluative cognition is that they appraise objects as good or bad by perceiving (or imagining) them pleasurably or painfully, and that they ground corresponding motivations (desire and aversion) and passions, which are all defined as responses to (or even in essence the same as) these

¹⁹⁸ Nussbaum has compiled a good number of passages concerned with the relevance of particulars and perceptual discrimination of them to action (1986, pp. 299-301, esp. note 29). The most important passage she cites on perception as what discriminates particulars is *EN* II.9.1109b15-25.

¹⁹⁹ McDowell and Nussbaum speak in this way. It is not clear whether they use the term in any strict sense, however, for even Achtenberg speaks of prudence as 'perception' but defines it strictly as νοῦς.

²⁰⁰ Moss' arguments are anticipated substantially by Achtenberg's discussion (2002, pp. 159-177) of the *Rhetoric's* definitions of the various emotions, in which she shows that these involve imaginative appearances (φαντασίαι) of the value of humans and their actions, as well as by Achtenberg's idea of 'imaginative construction', to which we return below.

evaluative cognitions. Illustrated by an example, the idea is simple. Because walking is good for health, when an animal walks freely it perceives that it is walking with pleasure in that perception and activity. Because the animal is capable of φαντασία, it simultaneously forms a φάντασμα of walking that extends beyond the immediately perceived activity of walking, and this φαντασία is inflected by a pleasure similar to that taken in actually walking. This pleasurable φαντασία produces, or is perhaps even equivalent with, the desire to continue walking, which is the proximate cause of locomotion and will in turn lead to frustration and other negative passions if walking is impossible. And in turn we can readily understand that a collection of similar φαντασῖαι will produce pleasurable memories of walking in general and a pleasant and eager anticipation of walking in the future.

Moss extends such apparently trivial psychological observations to attribute to Aristotle a concept of φαντασία as the chief non-rational faculty which appraises or evaluates objects as good or bad (very nearly equivalent to pleasure and pain at this stage) and grounds most human motivations, passions, and locomotion, even when these do not concern paradigmatic objects of bodily pleasure and pain and are inflected by rational thought. Thus she argues in detail that the analysis of the various passions in the *Rhetoric* should be understood to imply that a passion is essentially determined by φαντασῖαι of human actions and circumstances revealed as good or bad by the essentially motivating pleasure or pain that inflects them. Complex emotions such as envy, for example, which we feel towards those we would be like, are determined by very complex φαντασῖαι - in this case at least the many φαντασῖαι of things we have learned to take pleasure in (to see as good), which affect us with pain when combined with the φαντασία of the good fortune of another to possess those same things. Underlying these analyses of the passions is a full-blown account of the role of

φαντασία in human motivation and action, to which we will return in our discussion of habituation.

For now it is enough to accept the general idea that perceptions and ‘imagination’ amount to an initial evaluation or appraisal of particular realities (actions, circumstances, events, etc.) under the aspect of the pleasure or pain with which they are perceived. This allows Moss to provide an interpretation of the role Aristotle gives to φαντασία in ethical deliberation.²⁰¹ In *De Anima* III.11 we read:

Sensitive imagination, as we have said, is found in all animals, deliberative imagination only in those that are calculative (τοῖς λογιστικοῖς): for whether to do this or that is already the task of calculation; and there must be one thing to measure, for that is pursued which is greater. It follows that they [calculative animals] must be able to make a unity out of several images.²⁰²

What is clear from a cursory reading of this passage is that animals which engage in deliberation, like human beings, have a deliberative form of imagination, and that deliberation issues in a decision about what to do by achieving some sort of synthesis of the products of that imagination. A first step in interpreting this passage is to note that deliberation, like all thought, depends on φαντάσματα, the content of φαντασία, and thinks what is in them.²⁰³ Now as we have seen, the object of deliberation is what is good in particular actions, and especially, as this passage indicates, *which* action is best and to be done. It eventually issues in a choice which motivates action directly. And as Moss argues, the content of practical φαντασία is a pleasurable or painful and motivating appearance of particular actions as good or bad. At one level, the passage therefore seems to imply that each thought in a deliberative process is tied to a corresponding evaluative φαντασία. Thus for example, the statement ‘the enemy is approaching’ is based on the fearful φαντασία of approaching torches in the night.²⁰⁴ Just as

²⁰¹ 2012, pp. 137-152.

²⁰² *DA* III.11.434a5.

²⁰³ *DA* III.7.431b1, 4.429b10-43015, 8.432a1-10.

²⁰⁴ *DA* III.7.431b1-5.

that φαντασία is fearful or cautious, so too the thought of the enemy's approach introduces a consideration of caution into a larger deliberation process, in which several φαντασίαι and thoughts play a motivating role.²⁰⁵

A second step in interpreting the passage is to make some sense of the 'synthesis' that is supposed to be provided by deliberative φαντασία and taken up by deliberation into a decision. To achieve this is to answer our question of how deliberation provides the minor premise of the practical syllogism in reliance on a pre-rational 'perception' of the value of particulars. For we are told that the synthesis of deliberative φαντασίαι results in the end of deliberation and is what must be pursued, and this is the same function as that played by the minor premise, which by specifying an action as good or best, conditions choice. Moss infers from what we have recognized about the evaluative role of deliberative φαντασίαι to an account of the overall process of deliberation and the 'synthesized' φαντασία it results in. Essentially, deliberative imagination will picture the various elements of a situation and the possible actions to be taken in it one after the other and in mutually determining and contrasting relationships. Each perception will bring with it various and increasingly complex motivations and passions which reveal the relative merits of each considered action in the situation as it is perceived. Calculation helps us hold these results in mind as we build an awareness of new circumstances and alternative possible actions into our φαντασία of the situation and helps direct us to actively imagine some of these. Eventually, it will seem or appear that, 'all things considered', one among the several actions considered is best, and this appearance will be inseparable from the fact that it is almost unambiguously imagined with pleasure, and with the

²⁰⁵ As Moss (2012, pp.142-145) and Achtenberg (2002, pp.162-165) note, Aristotle consistently compares evaluative affirmation and denial in thinking, and the rational motivations and passions engendered here, to the pleasurable and painful perceptions and imaginations which first reveal particular objects as good or bad and motivate us with appetites and passions (see especially *DA* III.7.431a5-15).

strongest or most attractive pleasure of all the alternatives. This is the synthetic φάντασμα, and calculation converts it into a rationally expressed minor premise, the basis of a choice.

A contrived example should make the idea concrete - take the instance of a deliberative φαντασία given by Aristotle himself - the fearful impression that the approaching torch is the enemy.²⁰⁶ Imagine this φάντασμα occurring in the context of a whole chain of deliberation in war. The outputted commander has as his responsibility the defense of the camp in the night. When he sees what appears to be an approaching enemy he might consider attacking. He will imagine himself and his troops ambushing an unsuspecting enemy a few miles outside of camp and victoriously defending the camp and will feel his θύμος urging him on. But perhaps he will also recall other situations in which allies approached other camps unawares and unannounced. Imagining himself ordering a full attack will no longer seem courageous - he now imagines that he might be attacking his allies and feels prospective dismay and shame and present reticence. Already these two contrasting φαντασίαι might lead him to critically examine his first φάντασμα: perhaps this is an enemy. At this point he may 'see' (imagine) himself sending a scout to confirm the identity of the approaching force and, given that the desire for victory over an enemy is now determined by caution lest the enemy be an ally, he will see this possibility with a certain measured satisfaction. Afterwards he could explain what led him to make his choice as follows: in a defensive situation the identity of unknown forces is to be confirmed, this was an unknown force, therefore I acted to confirm its identity. A philosopher could equally express it: courage is an excellence and an intermediate between extremes in actions of war, this maneuver is an intermediate between the available extremes of attack and laxity, therefore this is courageous (or good tactics or some such exercise of τέχνη).

²⁰⁶ *DA* III.7.431b1-5.

We will consider some other and more significant examples of the synthetic evaluative φαντασίαι that identify the best available action and ground choice. But first we should note that despite the crucial role pleasure and pain play in Moss' interpretation, she is careful to note that pleasure and pain are not simply equivalent with the good on this view.²⁰⁷ The point is rather than these pre-rational forms of cognition - perception and imagination - reveal what is good and bad in a movement towards or away from the object which *is* pleasurable or painful. What is good is perceived or imagined with various forms and shades of pleasure and what is bad with various forms or shades of pain, and the φαντασία which grounds a choice typically involves a very nuanced passion which is activated by its object in the most pleasant and motivating way that is available to a nuanced appreciation of the real situation and the various alternatives.

With this firmly in mind, we can now inflect Moss' account with the metaphysics we have found at work in the principles of Aristotelian deliberation. The deliberative imagination which results in a synthetic, 'all-things-considered' appraisal of a situation and the best possible particular action available in it should be understood as an evaluation of particular situations and actions in the light of the metaphysical principles we have argued guide Aristotelian deliberation. This has already been suggested by Achtenberg, who has her own general account of the function of deliberative imagination - what she calls 'imaginative construction'.²⁰⁸ Like Moss, Achtenberg recognizes that an important element of deliberation is to perceive and imagine the real and possible circumstances of action and the possible actions that are available in them. Because of her focus on the metaphysical principles of ethics, though, Achtenberg

²⁰⁷ 2012, pg. 66.

²⁰⁸ 2002, pp. 179-182, 151-156. Note, however, that Achtenberg's interpretation of this function is more intellectualistic than Moss', in that she does not systematically distinguish between perception/imagination and thinking as irrational and rational cognitions.

adds that this deliberative imagination is inflected by an awareness of the general ends that guide the agent in their action - namely the analogical (and as we have argued, hierarchical) ideas of happiness and (the) excellence(s). The synthetic construction that deliberative imagination eventually produces identifies the best possible action in the light of such principles; or in other words, the best possible instantiation of them.

This is precisely what we should expect from the metaphysics we sketched in the previous section. For the central tenets of that interpretation involved claiming that every particular action that can adequately be described as ‘good’ instantiates some aspect of the analogical, hierarchical idea of happiness. Likewise, it is implied by the way we have characterized the practical syllogism’s minor premise. Here a general idea about happiness or (an individual) excellence is specified to hold of a particular action or objective, thereby evaluated as good. If deliberative imagination helps provide this evaluative minor premise, and its evaluation works on the basis of general ideas of happiness defined analogically and hierarchically, we should expect that deliberative imagination is inflected by an awareness of such metaphysical principles, and that the synthetic image it provides and which grounds the resolution of choice is the apparently best possible instantiation of such principles. We will now follow upon this suggestion with an account of how deliberation ‘constitutes’ particular actions as ‘the best available’ in this way. In what follows we mostly speak of ‘deliberation’ and ‘choice’ simply, rather than isolating and analyzing in detail the specific pre-rational functions of imagination and its synthetic image. This is because we take it for granted on the basis of the foregoing interpretation that rationally articulated deliberations and choices rely upon deliberative φαντασίαι. If we can articulate how the rational expressions of ‘deliberation’ and ‘choice’ seek and achieve the instantiations of our metaphysical principle of happiness, the

same explanation applies in principle to their pre-rational bases. We defend this extension in Section 5.

B) Deliberation Seeks the Best Available Instantiation of the Principle Defining Happiness

We are therefore trying to understand how the choice of a particular action in accordance with good deliberation recognizes a particular action as the best possible instantiation of the metaphysical principles we defined in Section 3. We begin from the relatively simple example of the imaginative construction and deliberative evaluation of actions meant to satisfy the demands of a single excellence, namely courage. Plainly the immediate goal of military action is victory. For Aristotle, however, victory is valuable only insofar as it guarantees peace and leisure for the city.²⁰⁹ Leisure, in turn, is valuable as the condition of free political activity and philosophy, both defended as activities that constitute the ultimate end of a human life and - in the case of politics - secure other necessities for that life.²¹⁰ Victory in war thus contributes to the key general limiting requirements of human society and flourishing, and is pursued as a good in this sense.

On the account of deliberation we are forming now, the courageous and prudent person in a situation of war will imaginatively construct each possible action in light of what, given the context, it contributes to this goal of peace and excellent leisure (rather than what harm it might mean to him personally). The courageous person is in fact described by Aristotle as exactly the sort of person who does everything for the sake of what is noble (τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα), namely for victory, peace and the honor he wins in battle for their sake, rather than his own

²⁰⁹ This is evident, as we already noted in II.3b above, from *Pol.* VII.2 on the limited value of war for societies.

²¹⁰ Again, this is evident from the passages we cited from *EN* X.7-8, *Politics*, and *Meta.* I.1-2, above.

personal safety.²¹¹ And as we saw in Section 3a, depending on the situation, a deliberator can settle upon very different and even opposed actions as fulfilling this single goal.

Aristotle does not describe explicitly his decision-process, but we can infer it from these comments, paired with the explicit interpretation of deliberative imaginative above. The courageous person will not simply look for opportunities to attack and act on them quickly – in many situations this will serve no purpose or actually compromise his purpose and amounts to rashness or glory-seeking. Rather, he will consider each individual action according to its merit (κατ' ἀξίαν)²¹² relative to his goal. As he does so, it will appear to him with various shades of pleasure or pain, in accordance with how it seems to further or frustrate his goal. He considers the possibility of attacking, letting his mind run over the various factual elements of the situation and how this course of action is likely to interact with them, whether it is likely to result in heavy losses, etc. Based on this work, as we saw above, he will eventually settle on a 'synthesized' image which seems to him, all things considered, to be the best and which he contemplates with most relish since he is excellent in his motivations. Sometimes he will conclude that attacking will help his cause best, and at others retreating, and so on. The difference depends on the nuanced differences in the situation and the actions available, and he discovers it in each case by imaginatively constructing a possible action and reacting based on its relationship to his goal. The action he chooses will be the one that, all things considered, seems to aim at victory and leisure most effectively, and which he views with the most unalloyed *thumodic* attraction as a result.

²¹¹ *EN* III.7.1115b10-20. The opposition to personal safety is explicit in *EN* III.6, and reappears in III.9, which also makes it clear, by the comment that the brave man will be most pained by the prospect of death, in proportion to his level of virtue and therefore enjoyment of life, that a truly brave man must have the noble goal of a city's excellent use of leisure in mind. Thus also why non-citizen mercenaries, though skilled, are not truly brave (III.8.1116b5-20).

²¹² *EN* III.7.1115b15.

We take it for granted that the deliberations displayed in each of the other excellences admit of similar interpretations. There is another class of deliberations which have interested interpreters, however, namely so-called tough choices, where competing values, and not just actions competing to satisfy one value, are at stake.²¹³ We have already seen (Chapter II.2) that these situations have motivated Nussbaum in her claim of the incommensurable pluralism of values in Aristotle. Even though we have dispensed with this argument in principle by our introduction of a hierarchical order among plural values (Chapter II.3b), we should still be able to indicate concretely how deliberative imagination guides thinking in making sound decisions on the basis of this unified hierarchy.

The so-called tough decisions do not occupy a prominent place in Aristotle's thought, but it is nonetheless possible to identify traces of conflicts between the excellences and external goods, the various excellences, and the two expressions of happiness. I will argue that in each of these cases of conflicts among values, the apparent conflict is resolved by a type of deliberative imagination. This imagination constructs the conflicting possible actions in the light of their circumstances and what they contribute to their conflicting ends. Because these ends are hierarchically ordered, this construction is at the same time a comparative evaluation of these actions, which Aristotle thinks typically indicates a clear priority to the excellent deliberator. To interpret these traces of conflicts among values in the text, I suggest we begin from the *Nicomachean Ethics* study of actions that are neither strictly voluntary nor strictly involuntary, but rather 'mixed'.²¹⁴ This discussion offers us a principle of how to conceive of

²¹³ That something like this is Nussbaum's concern can be seen from her comments that pluralism in goods leads to vulnerability (1986, pg. 298; 1992, pp. 63-66) and in her claim that genuine decision making cannot achieve neat syntheses of the various values it recognizes (1986, pp. 294-296; 1992, pg. 60). McDowell's concern with this problem is evident in his discussion of arbitrating between the claims of the virtues and the unity of virtues (1998, pp. 52-53). In Williams (1985, pp. 49-53) and Macintyre (1981, pp. 157-158) it is latent in their claim (contra Nussbaum) that Aristotle does not recognize the possibility of moral tragedy.

²¹⁴ *EN* III.1110a5-1110b5.

deliberative imagination's resolution of conflicts between values.

In Aristotle's analysis, voluntary actions generally are actions pursued autonomously and under the conscious impression that they are good, without coercion or deception about their factual contexts. Involuntary actions are those that the agent would not pursue unless he were coerced or ignorant about these contexts, because he sees them as bad. Aristotle calls 'mixed' those actions that in themselves or in general, in most situations (*ἀπλῶς*) the agent would not pursue as good even being aware of their contexts and not being coerced, but which in certain contexts he will knowingly and without coercion pursue.²¹⁵ The example he gives is that of the choice to throw cargo overboard in a storm in order to save the lives of the passengers. No one would want to throw cargo overboard under ordinary circumstances unless he were quite insane. But under these particular circumstances, anyone would, unless they were quite insane.

Aristotle claims that the mixed actions are more like voluntary actions than involuntary actions, even though in themselves or most generally they are bad and would never be pursued. The reason is as follows. The goal of action is not merely the end or good in general and in the abstract. As Aristotle states many times, it is the end attainable by action,²¹⁶ the best end available in a particular situation. In the present passage, he refers to this principle by stating that the end (*τέλος*) of action is defined by the opportune moment (*κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν*).²¹⁷ This is somewhat stronger than the usual statement of the doctrine of the mean as it is manifested in the realm of an individual excellence, which would be more like: 'the right *action* is relative to the opportune moment', with the end being unchanged. In this case, the agent must

²¹⁵ See especially *EN* III.1.1110a5-15, from which we draw most of the following analysis.

²¹⁶ *EN* I.6.1096b30, III.1.1112b25, VI.1.1141b10. Also, the comments that action concerns particulars most properly (*EN* I.6.1097a10, III.1.1110b5, VI.7.1141b15, etc.).

²¹⁷ *EN* III.1.1110a10.

acknowledge that what generally or usually is his end or goal (for example, to make money from his cargo) can no longer be his goal in these circumstances. The circumstance forces him to take up a different goal, and consequently also an action that conflicts with his ordinary goals.

To say that under such circumstances an action involuntary ‘in itself’ is effectively a voluntary action is to say that it becomes good. The reason is precisely that this action contributes to the *best possible* goal in the situation and is therefore the best *available* action. Here I think we see an implicit statement of the principle of the resolution of conflicts among opposing values by deliberative imagination. The situation contains certain intrinsic limits on the types of actions that are possible in it: throw the goods overboard, slacken the sails, etc. At a certain point, a skilled deliberator can see that the situation will force a choice between two or more possible actions, for example where the choice is between making the boat lighter and having no way to navigate it. This is simultaneously a choice between ends: one’s wealth and one’s life. Deliberative imagination is the capacity that recognizes all this – that only certain actions are possible, and how they imply certain ends. Aristotle states that in situations of conflict it is not easy to decide which is the best available action and the best available end, and that the rules for such decisions cannot be stated in advance and in isolation from the particular cases; they are, as we have seen, the domain of perception or imagination.²¹⁸ But this dearth of rules does not necessarily mean that there is no right decision or that deliberation must recognize or constitute new ends which express happiness in ways it did not previously recognize. Because Aristotle recognizes a hierarchy of ends, the ends represented in such an alternative will be two or more terms in a unified, hierarchical relationship to one another and

²¹⁸ *EN* III.1.1110b5 and *EN* II.9.1109b15-25.

to other ends. They are all expressive of ultimate happiness to varying degrees. The same imaginative construction which identifies the available actions in a situation, the alternatives between them, and their relationship to ends therefore simultaneously identifies the best possible action given the situation and the ends it allows to be instantiated in action. It does so without at any point having to posit new ends or ‘unfold a general concept of happiness’; it merely recognizes, as we might say, which of the given alternatives best satisfies the existing ends.

We shall now briefly illustrate these claims in more detail, drawing on texts that seem to indicate conflicts among values and showing how the deliberative imagination of possible actions in light of their place in a hierarchical order of ends resolves these conflicts and produces voluntary decisions which are best understood as decisions for something that best instantiates general principles of value. First take the example of conflicts between external goods and the excellences. We saw (Chapter II.3b) that even though Aristotle recognizes that good fortune influences a person’s capacity for happiness, he also views external goods as valuable precisely to the extent that they secure a life of excellent activity. This is a hierarchy of value which justifies sacrificing wealth, health, and even life itself to excellence in certain cases. We have just seen this in his illustration of ‘mixed’ voluntary actions – it is clearly ‘worth it’, in his view, to sacrifice wealth when it is a clear barrier to one’s continued existence and excellent activity.

The same unqualified judgement occurs in more extreme cases, though. For example, Aristotle recognizes that the courageous man, because he enjoys life most fully, will be pained to lose his life and values life the most of all men.²¹⁹ We might say that in the abstract, death

²¹⁹ *EN* III.9.

is bad and fearful for him just as to everyone else, and in fact even more so. And yet in the situation of noble danger, he sees clearly that it is ‘not worth it’ to preserve his life when his death would secure peace and leisure for the city and immortal fame for himself; this is in fact what distinguishes him most clearly from the coward. In other words, he is capable of the imaginative construction that recognizes that such situations make it necessary to choose between life and honor and is capable of recognizing and clinging to the higher of these goals in his particular actions.²²⁰

In such cases then, deliberation can be seen to resolve conflicts between pre-existing values by recognizing which action, by instantiating the highest possible value in a definite situation, most effectively expresses happiness in the given situation. We see similar evidence in Aristotle’s treatment of hypothetical conflicts between the political and philosophical expressions of happiness. We have seen (Chapter II.3b) that *Nicomachean Ethics* X.6-8 represents Aristotle’s general judgement of the superiority of philosophy to politics. He recognizes that to some extent, these lives are usually compatible and co-manifest such that the philosopher is a more or less active citizen with excellent friends and a tolerable degree of

²²⁰ Passages such as these should lead writers to be wary of exaggerating the extent to which Aristotle is divergent from the Socratic school in his thought about happiness: it is after all a characteristically Socratic thesis that material goods and even biological life are *qualified* goods. We are inclined to think that even if Aristotle reintroduced a certain amount of material dependence into the happy life, and is thus more receptive to tragic intuitions than other Socratics (as Nussbaum and Aubenque both claim), he was still committed to the basic perspective of the philosophical equation of happiness with virtue and thus with rational control. This could be demonstrated by a more detailed study of the relationship between fortune and excellence in securing happiness in *EN* I.8-11. The failure of such anti-Socratic (or anti-Platonic) interpretations of Aristotle is illustrated nicely by Nussbaum’s self-confessed inability to explain how Aristotle could see functions not concerned with *survival* as satisfying a *telos* (1978, pp.76-85, esp. n. 27). She has interpreted *telos* with an excessive emphasis on natural, biological life, despite noting (1978, pg. 69 n. 12, 77 n. 21) that it and life also have a reference to the god (which we have argued is in the end its primary reference). This form of naturalism seems incapable of registering the excellence of - for example - courageous actions which occasionally involve noble death, i.e. the destruction of the organism they perfect. ‘Life’ and *telos*, in the sense of characteristic activity, can demand the destruction and disruption of biological life and function. It is by some such means that Aristotle’s theoretical philosophy can be seen to justify archaic values (on which general concept see Jaeger, 1946, pp. 11-14, and our Chapter III, Section 2).

material prosperity - all goods which achieve and fulfill part of his nature and also help him and others philosophize well. And yet Aristotle considers hypothetical instances in which they are separated in order to reach a judgement on the question of superiority. His judgement is unequivocal: the man who for whatever reason is friendless and without political position but who can still philosophize is happy (and even eminently so).²²¹ We saw the reasoning in Section 3b: the philosopher approximates a purity of self-sufficient happiness more proper to what is divine in humanity than what is not, and his happiness is a higher manifestation of the very same happiness proper to politics.

We can now note that this is not a merely hypothetical exercise. This metaphysically-buttressed hierarchy in the two major expressions of happiness inflects concrete deliberation. For example, in the case of friendship, Aristotle states and clearly himself acts by the principle that we should prefer truth to our friends,²²² and distinguishes a hierarchy of friendships based on the degree to which they are predicated on intrinsic values like philosophy and the rest of excellence.²²³ Perhaps the philosopher can usually sustain her search for truth and her personal and political friends simultaneously, and in the abstract and in such situations would never choose the life of solitude or political exile. But it is obviously possible for circumstances to force a philosopher into the choice between a relatively friendless clinging to truth and a friendship founded on falsehood, prejudice, flattery or base compromises, at both the personal and the political level. It seems obvious that Aristotle would approve of the philosopher who can recognize – through the imaginative construction of these options in the light of their

²²¹ EN X.7-8. The clear separation of philosophical and political activity is of course one of the enduring legacies of Aristotle's thought. Note that this resolution is even *stronger* than the resolution of external goods vs. excellence – for the solitary philosopher is still happy, and *most* happy, whereas the man who is materially destitute for long enough is incapable of happiness.

²²² EN I.6.1096a10-15.

²²³ EN VIII.3.

meaning for the ends of life – when her highest values are at risk, and who mercilessly separates herself from those she loves and her political rights in such circumstances.

A final site of conflict is that which arises between the individual excellences. Aristotle is even less explicit on this point than on the two previous ones. We may note, however, that his doctrine of the unity of the excellences recognizes it implicitly, for it is the resolution of such conflicts.²²⁴ For, when we look to the context of this doctrine, we see that the unity of the excellences is something that is *achieved*, by the acquisition of prudence and especially of good deliberation.²²⁵ At an earlier stage of education, the several 'natural' excellences might incline us in conflicting directions in particular situations, or a single excellence might incline us excessively in one direction in every situation.

In his discussion of mixed voluntary actions, Aristotle includes instances in which a man endures something shameful (αἰσχρός) for the sake of a greater good, a discussion which implicitly recognizes conflicts between the excellences.²²⁶ We could imagine a man pressured to do something shameful in order to protect his relatives in the power of a tyrant. We could imagine, for instance, that he is forced in this way to become a flatterer. To engage in flattery is completely against the excellences that concern truthfulness and social pleasures and pains,²²⁷ but relinquishing responsibility for his family is an injustice. This amounts to a putative conflict between the excellences.

Now Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of the excellences states that such conflicts are resolved by prudence, the chief part of which is deliberation.²²⁸ Deliberation recognizes what

²²⁴ The doctrine of the unity of the excellences is stated at *EN* VI.13.1144b10-1145a1.

²²⁵ Particularly *EN* 13.1144b1-15.

²²⁶ III.1.1110a20.

²²⁷ *EN* IV.6-7.

²²⁸ Again, *EN* VI.13.1144b15, 1145a1.

is best in the situation, and this gives the deliberator all the excellences, simultaneously and without conflict. This is reflected in the discussion of the endurance of what is shameful: Aristotle states clearly that in such situations, a deed that under ordinary circumstances and in the abstract would be shameful should be chosen for the sake of a greater good.²²⁹ The implication is that in such a case a good deliberator will recognize what are the available actions, will see that they put his concerns for justice and personal integrity into conflict, and will recognize that satisfying the demands of the former is more important than preserving the latter. The details might change greatly, of course, and other circumstances might make the hard choice unnecessary or change a person's priorities. The point is that Aristotle recognizes some possibility of conflict between the excellences and seems to think that such conflicts can typically be resolved by deliberation, which we have shown to employ imaginative construction to make its decisions.²³⁰

We have therefore suggested how deliberation connects the pre-existing, assumed principles of a hierarchical metaphysics of value to the individual available options for action in each situation in order to choose in each case that action which is the best. It does so through imaginatively constructing the various possible actions in light of what, given the concrete situation, they contribute to the ends of life. When multiple actions compete towards the goal proper to a specific excellence, this imaginative construction reveals the one that best contributes to that end, given the specific limits of the situation. When the available actions are such that multiple ends are put into conflict with one another, it reveals which action, given the

²²⁹ *EN* III.1.1110a20-30.

²³⁰ Obviously, we are not defending the idea of the unity of the excellences. For a cautious defense, see McDowell (1998, 50-57). For emphatic and explicit denials, see Williams (1985, pp. 49-53) and MacIntyre (1981, pp. 157-158). Additionally, it is not very clear how the metaphysical hierarchy of ends works in Aristotle to ground such resolutions, just as we noted that it is unclear how the several individual moral excellences are supposed to reflect the divine. These are areas for potential further study.

available possibilities, instantiates the best ends, those that most completely express happiness. In each case, deliberation grasps the value of individual, context-defined, imagined possibilities of action in terms of their constitutive relation to the general principles of happiness it recognizes. It seeks the best available action given the circumstances: this is the most general possible statement of its operation.

Section 5: The Specific Character of Deliberate Thought; Instruction in Deliberation Explained

Something like this is therefore the picture we have been forming of Aristotelian deliberation and its metaphysical standards. We can summarize it by saying that deliberation is the work to identify the most eminent possible or available instance of or contribution to the goal of εὐδαιμονία. Deliberation begins from a general sense of what it means to fulfill humanity, and of the contribution of each type of activity and external good to that end. It imaginatively constitutes the various available actions in the light of those ends and the limitations of the situation in order to identify the action that seems to best instantiate the general goals of life and the particular goals of the moment. In this final section we take an explicit look at the type of *education by instruction* that instills this deliberative ability. We will argue that it is a pre-theoretical, pre-philosophical way of getting attuned to the metaphysical structure of ends.

We can begin by registering two difficulties with our view that deliberation, especially through acts of imaginative construction, seeks and finds the best available particular instantiation of general metaphysical principles. We anticipated one difficulty at the end of Chapter II.4a, when we said that our account speaks mostly of ‘choice’ and ‘deliberation’ generally rather than showing in great detail how deliberative *imagination* in particular

constitutes alternative ‘in the light of’ general ideas of happiness. The interlocutor might raise the problem that we can perhaps understand this well enough in the case of rationally expressed choices, but that it is difficult to see how the ‘synthetic image’ that underlies them should contain some reference to metaphysical principles. How can an act of imagination see particular actions ‘in the light of’ general hierarchically related ideas and thereby resolve conflicts among values by identifying the best possible action? Why should we not rather hold that it is deliberative thought alone which understands that individual actions express general ideas? Hasn’t our analysis in fact implicitly assumed this, by speaking in general of ‘deliberation’ and ‘choice’ but showing a preference for the casuistic rationalization of action and choice by metaphysical ideas?

Secondly, there is a more general objection to the idea that deliberative thought itself grasps actions in the light of metaphysical and other scientific principles at all. For metaphysics is a science (ἐπιστήμη) - in fact it is the form of science that strives after the most exact and teachable definitions as well as their completion in the intuition of fundamental, unchanging principles.²³¹ And yet Aristotle makes it very clear that deliberation is not scientific.²³² We are told that it lacks the exactness or precision (ἀκρίβεια) of science. Science is about the unchanging and necessary definitions of eternally and necessarily existing things.²³³ But deliberation is about the particular facts that are important for actions. These, as we have seen, are highly variable both in their factual existence and in their value. Both their existence and value is revealed principally through a form of perception or imagination and does not admit of precise and action-specific definition beforehand. Deliberation can hardly be the same as

²³¹ *Meta.*I.1, *EN* X.7.

²³² *EN* VI.5.1140a30-1140b1.

²³³ *EN* VI.3.

metaphysical reasoning. But when we, following Achtenberg, claim that to deliberate is to inquire into the best instantiation of metaphysically defined principles, are we not collapsing this distinction? Haven't we plainly asserted that deliberation is a type of metaphysical reasoning that is best learned through a course in metaphysics?

Both these objections seem to implicitly hold that different modes of cognition (and instruction) must have correspondingly different objects and, conversely, that one object corresponds only to one form of inquiry (and instruction). We will argue that this is contrary to Aristotle's view in three stages. We will first indicate how metaphysics and ethics are very different forms of inquiry, with different standards of reasoning, but with partly overlapping objects of study. In this and for the general idea inferred from it, we rely on Deborah Achtenberg.²³⁴ Then, however, we will distinguish between deliberation and philosophical ethics in the same way. These, too, are different modes of inquiry with different standards of reasoning but a partially overlapping object. Our response is even more forceful here, for the interpreters who object that deliberation cannot be articulated metaphysically are so far from claiming that deliberation and philosophical ethics are unrelated that they actually tend to conflate them. We, however, claim that deliberation, philosophical ethics, and metaphysics and the other sciences are all different forms of inquiry with different standards of reasoning and processes of transmission, but partially overlapping objects.²³⁵ Finally, we will show that the first concern, that deliberative imagination cannot reveal actions in the light of metaphysical principles, likewise overlooks the possibility that it involves an extremely implicit, imprecise

²³⁴ Achtenberg argues that interpreters who argue that metaphysics is unrelated to ethics on the basis of their different standards of reasoning confuse two forms of imprecision: that proper to the object and that proper to the form of inquiry (2002, pp. 61-96). We focus on the claim that metaphysics and ethics have differing degrees of precision while studying the same object.

²³⁵ In this we go somewhat beyond Achtenberg, although she appears at least in principle to recognize the distinction between deliberation and philosophical ethics (2002, pp. 138-142).

and indirect view of the same metaphysical principles that deliberative thought, ethics, and metaphysics cognize at ever higher levels.

Let us begin, then, with the relationship between the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the more precise sciences, especially metaphysics. Aristotle often stresses that ethics occasionally deals with the same realities as psychology, the philosophy of nature, and theology, but with less precision. The reason for this imprecision lies in the fact that philosophical ethics studies the human soul, human excellence, and happiness from a human perspective, with more concrete detail, and with reliance on dialectical arguments. Metaphysics and the other sciences, however, without entirely abandoning this dialectical method, seek to arrive at precise and objectively adequate definitions of some of the principles which explain ethical arguments – in other words, they seek knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), and also, in the case of metaphysics in Aristotle's precise sense of the term, insight (νοῦς). We will indicate this overlap in subject matter and distinction in method by a single example, already familiar to us: the definitions of happiness given in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and their support by the theory of the soul's capacities and activities.

Martha Nussbaum has shown that *Nicomachean Ethics*' I.7's definition of happiness as activity of soul in accordance with excellent reason can be interpreted as a dialectical argument relying on the interlocutor's pre-reflective sense of what makes him human, what activities he identifies with.²³⁶ The theory of the soul which divides the soul into parts and identifies two grades of 'rational' soul and two expressions of happiness is similar.²³⁷ It relies on the average

²³⁶ 1995, esp. pp. 110-120. The argument is even more clearly dialectical, in that it relies on a preliminary collection and very hasty arbitration of views about the nature of happiness and self-sufficient activity (*EN* I.5, 7.1097a15-1097b20), and follows an extended discussion of the imprecision of the science and the need for prior experience to supply its basic principles (*EN* I.3-4).

²³⁷ *EN* I.13 especially, but also X.6, VI.2.

excellent person's experience of internal conflict, decision making, and thinking. In this case Aristotle recognizes this explicitly, saying that it relies on popular works and is not as exact as psychology, though good enough for political (legislative) purposes.²³⁸ The arguments for the superiority of the contemplative type of happiness in Book X, chapters 7-8, are also dialectical, presupposing views about the nature of the gods, the purpose of leisurely and political activity, and the first book's own dialectically established ideas about the nature of happiness.²³⁹

In these passages of the ethics, Aristotle makes dialectical use of concepts that he elsewhere defines more precisely. These concepts include at least: soul, capacity (δύναμις), activity or function (ἐνέργεια, ἔργον), good or end (ἄγαθον, τέλος), thinking (νόησις), god (ὁ θεός), and arguably even εὐδαιμονία. In the metaphysical, natural, and psychological works we see arguments from and for definitions of these terms that are *less* dialectical than these ethical passages, but which establish the same points or points needed to justify and explain the ethical claims more thoroughly. Thus as we have seen (Chapter II.3), we are given definitions of good or end as the activity that defines a substance. We are given arguments for viewing the best activity absolutely speaking as the activity of what is a substance in the truest sense (namely God). We are given arguments that this activity is basically the activity of thinking, and that it is by definition the most self-sufficient activity, having no goal beyond self-contemplation. We are told that the human being, too, is most a substance of its own when it thinks and that by this it resembles this most true substance and actually shares in it and becomes it.

We examined some of these claims in a little more detail in Section 3b above, and it is beyond our scope to add anything here. Our claim is that they overlap with the claims of the

²³⁸ EN I.13.1102a25-30.

²³⁹ Here, too, Aristotle stops short and says that the topic is more proper to another science (EN X.8.1177b20).

ethics and actually give a higher-order support to them. The subject-matter of metaphysics and ethics seems to overlap, despite these inquiries' different levels of precision in their grasp of principles and causes. At this level, then, we have some reason to doubt our interlocutor's assumption that different sciences must have entirely different objects. Our skepticism should become even more pronounced, though, once we realize that deliberation and philosophical ethics are different modes of inquiry with overlapping fields. This we can now do.

Our term 'philosophical ethics' refers to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* and translates Aristotle's term, ἡ πολιτική.²⁴⁰ As we have seen, ἡ πολιτική is plausibly distinguished from science, and the suffix supports the conventional translation 'the political art'. We can now offer a conception of art (τέχνη) which ἡ πολιτική satisfies, and which simultaneously distinguishes it from prudence or deliberation. We center this task on a passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.8. Aristotle has just outlined how each individual man's prudence includes knowledge of universals and of particulars, and that the controlling (ἀρχιτεκτονική) prudence is the latter, for individual actions are in the class of particulars.²⁴¹ He then says:

The political art (ἡ πολιτική) and prudence are the same disposition (ἕξις), but they are not the same (εἶναι οὐ ταυτὸν αὐταῖς). [For] of the prudence concerned with the city, the controlling part is the art of legislation (ἡ νομοθετική), while that [form of prudence concerned with the city] which is related to particulars (ἡ δὲ ὡς τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα) has the general name of 'politics' (ἡ πολιτική). This [latter] is practical and deliberative, for a [legal or political] resolution is something practical and has to do with particulars. For this reason only those [who practice this art] are said to do politics (πολιτεύεσθαι), for they alone act in the way that manual artists (χειροτέχναι) act. It seems that prudence, too, is most properly the prudence concerned with oneself and the individual, and this has the general name of 'prudence'.²⁴²

On the surface, this passage seems to contradict our claim that the political art is distinct from prudence. For Aristotle says they are the same disposition of mind and likens the activity

²⁴⁰ The fact that ἡ πολιτική is Aristotle's name for the inquiry of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* taken together becomes clear initially at *EN* I.2. More evidence is cited below.

²⁴¹ *EN* VI.7.1141b10-20.

²⁴² *EN* VI.8.1121b20-30.

of ‘doing politics’ to the prudential arrangement of one’s own activity. They both have to do with individual actions, rely on experience, and presumably have little to do with fixed and generally known and defended rules. This conclusion would be overly hasty, however.

Just as Aristotle recognized a part of an individual’s prudence about his own good that deals with universals, so here he recognizes a part of the political art, generally so called, which deals with universals. This is legislation, and he calls it the controlling (ἀρχιτεκτονική) element in politics. We know from elsewhere that this form of ‘politics’ seeks to define the principles of legislation and cannot rely solely on experience and the study of political history and constitutions to do so.²⁴³ It must use these in its search for the definitions and principles of good political order. This search will take it into the realm of definitions of human happiness and excellence, the subject matter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for these are the principles of a good political order.²⁴⁴ ἡ πολιτική in this sense is the subject matter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* alike.

Aristotle does not identify *this* form of ‘politics’ with prudence: he reserves the name ‘prudence’ for the politics that has to do with passing and implementing particular resolutions, and with the form of thinking that has to do with one’s individual actions, in which, as we have seen, experience with particulars dominates. Aristotle compares this prudence to manual labor, a comparison which recurs in *Metaphysics* I.1’s genealogy of the forms of knowledge.²⁴⁵ There it becomes clear that prudence, like manual labor, is a form of knowledge by experience and habitual skill. This sort of knowledge relies on acquaintance with individual objects and relations in a context of productive work and makes recommendations based on their general

²⁴³ *EN* X.9.1180b10-1181b20.

²⁴⁴ *Pol.* VII.1-3.

²⁴⁵ *Meta.* I.1.981a1-981b-5.

similarities and dissimilarities through various instances. It is distinguished there from knowledge by art (τέχνη), properly so-called. Art has the same objects as habit and experience and has a similar practical goal. It knows these objects according to their universal causes and principles, however, and its practical role is accordingly more on the order of planning and organization among manual arts.²⁴⁶

It seems that the relationship between prudence (both individual and political) and legislation parallels this general relationship between knowledge by habit and experience and knowledge by art. Individual prudence and its political expression deliberate about the value of particular actions, resolutions, and the like. They are largely confined to individual situations of choice and action. They rely on experience, perception and imagination, and do not settle issues by very explicit inquiry into general principles. They are more *ad hoc* than this, offering reasoning based on often implicit understandings of principles, relations between situations, and commitments. Legislation, on the other hand, moves towards more general and principled definitions of happiness, excellence, and good political order. It is still practical but is not confined to a very immediate and individual context. It presupposes experience, but its judgements are not limited to summaries of past experience and make less use of imagination and perception: it identifies the principles that are active in experience. The definitions of legislation or philosophical ethics are obviously not irrelevant to deliberation.²⁴⁷ They are,

²⁴⁶ To readers who remember that Aristotle distinguished prudence from art on the basis of the distinction between production and action (*EN* VI.4), it might seem strange that legislation should be an art, since if it produces anything it seems to produce only happiness. We concede this but note that the form of happiness it produces is more complex and external than that of the prudence concerned with the individual's happiness. Legislation produces the good order of the entire state and organizes the relationships of the various arts and institutions according to a plan (*EN* I.1-2). It is clearly related to prudence, overlapping with it to a great degree in object, but its relationship to its object is more 'external' than that of an individual man's deliberation and the action it 'produces'.

²⁴⁷ As Aristotle acknowledges at *EN* VI.8.1142a5-10.

however, more universal and principled than any truly deliberative thought.²⁴⁸

It seems, then, that our interlocutor's objection falls short here again, and perhaps even more so. For whereas it is at least plausible on the surface that metaphysics might be unrelated to ethics in subject matter, and this is familiar to some modern ways of thinking, it is very strange to think that philosophical ethics, because its methods differ from deliberation, has an entirely different object. The objection only has weight so long as the interlocutor obscures the difference between deliberation and philosophical ethics. Once this distinction is made, we see plainly that different modes of inquiry, with different standards of reasoning, can overlap in their objects, and that there is no objection to the structure of deliberation being articulated by metaphysical principles.

The first objection to our account alleged that we have no right to assume that our account of rationally expressed choice as instantiating metaphysical principles extends also to non-rational deliberative imagination. But we have now begun to recognize that there are various levels of precision, universality, and remove from practice with which thought treats one and the same class of objects, and that this does not make it in principle impossible for a 'lower' level of thought to treat of universal and complex metaphysical principles in a less sophisticated way than a 'higher' level. We can now see that our schematic account of the relationship between deliberative imagination and thought (Chapter II.4a) allows for the same relationship between these two forms of cognition. Deliberative imagination represents in evaluative and motivating images what deliberate thought grasps in words and concepts; thus if a rational choice expresses that a particular action is the best instantiation of general

²⁴⁸ Our analysis agrees in several respects with that of Moss (2012, pp. 179-190), who argues that this distinction between habitual/experiential thought and *τέχνη* does not imply that prudence in its capacity as *τέχνη* does more than identify 'what contributes to ends'.

metaphysical principles, the synthetic image produced by deliberation reveals the same fact in the non-expressive ‘language’ of images, motivations, passions, and pleasures and pains.

We saw in Section 4a that Aristotle thinks every rational thought relies on a corresponding image for its formulation, thinking universal forms that are already implicit in those images, and that a similar relationship holds between φαντασῖαι and the perceptions on which they are based. This fact allows him to assert a general parallelism between perceptions, φαντασῖαι, thoughts, and the motivations and passions founded on each, which we find attested in the following passage:

To perceive then is like bare asserting or thinking; but when [the perceiving?] is pleasant or painful, the soul somehow affirms or negates, pursues or avoids. To feel pleasure or pain is to act with the sensitive mean towards what is good or bad as such. Both avoidance and appetite when actual are identical with this: the faculty of appetite and avoidance are not different, either from one another or from the faculty of sense-perception but their being *is* different.²⁴⁹

This is one of the most important passages on which Moss relies in arguing that perception and imagination amount to actual cognitions of value via inherently motivating pleasant or painful sensations, but this is not the aspect which concerns us here. We are rather concerned with the parallelism that is asserted between perception (with which Aristotle typically associates imagination) and thought, and the motivations they condition. We are told that perceiving an object as good or bad in a pleasurable or painful perception is like thinking it good or bad, and each conditions (or even *is*) a corresponding motivation for or against the object. The idea is of course not that perceptions or imaginations *are* propositions, but rather that these pleasurable, painful and inherently motivating representations of objects are basically akin to the propositions they make possible. Perceiving that I am drinking water with pleasure and wanting to continue is akin to asserting ‘this water is good’ and is the basis of this

²⁴⁹ DA III.7.431a5-10.

assertion. Imagining with fear and hesitation that the approaching torch is the enemy is basically akin to this sentence which describes that an enemy and a potential harm is approaching.

This idea is in principle enough to maintain that there are synthetic products of deliberative imagination which reveal particular actions as the best instantiations of general metaphysical principles. For we have maintained that every rationally expressed deliberative statement corresponds to an image with a parallel inherent intentional and motivational structure. But in Section 4b we showed that rational choices are conditioned by a deliberate thought (the minor premise) which expresses that the action to be chosen is the best available instantiation of the general principles defining happiness. This deliberate thought must be conditioned by an act and object of imagination with content and motivating power. This is the role we have assigned to the ‘synthetic image’, following Moss and Achtenberg (Section 4a). The synthetic image must therefore reveal actions in the light of the general metaphysical principles they instantiate, and condition rationally expressed choices by revealing the apparently best possible instantiation of those principles.

We are in sum suggesting that deliberative imagination and its synthetic image, rationally expressed deliberation and choice, and philosophical theories all deal with the same objects in ascending degrees of explicitness, universality and precision. This allows us to maintain that deliberation is a largely ad-hoc, dialectical, experiential form of thinking while also maintaining that its structure is articulated more precisely, explicitly, and universally in philosophical theory, without contradiction. And the same holds for deliberative imagination and its synthetic image’s relationship to rational deliberation and choice itself. It is difficult to be more concrete in showing how the synthetic image is achieved and how it reflects

metaphysical principles in this implicit and pre-rational way. For other than clearly implying and requiring that this be so, the concrete analysis of imaginative acts and their fine distinctions from rational statement is beyond the scope of Aristotle's texts and their frame of reference. Furthermore, even such analysis as we are able to provide by our own lights and for our own creative purposes will be incomplete until complemented by our efforts in Chapter III to show how these pre-rational imaginative syntheses are guided by a pre-rational orientation to the ends of life generally (habit). We can nonetheless give a very provisional indication of the function of the synthetic image in the interest of a complete statement of the parallel relations holding between it, rational expressed choice and philosophical theory in their relations to the principles defining happiness.

We will illustrate this parallel relationship by the use of two examples which we have already treated. First, take the case of the individual in a storm at sea who we considered in Section 4. He is trying to save himself and everyone else on board, is faced with several concrete ways to arrive at his goal, and his deliberation and decision making is immediately and intuitively framed by that aim. He does not say to himself 'life is worth pursuing so that I can pursue that which justifies my every action, what I consider to be happiness' or offer an argument supporting that claim. Life is his concern in a much more immediate sense. Similarly, when he decides to throw goods overboard to make the boat easier to navigate he does not say, even to himself, 'external goods are not worth the sacrifice of life itself since their value is instrumental and contingent on the support of life and a virtuous life at that.' He may say something like 'it is not *worth it* to keep these wares' or 'we will die if we keep these goods aboard', leaving many layers of ideation and intention unexpressed, 'in the background', so to speak.

On our account, the principal unexpressed content here is the pre-rational, synthetic image. In short, his brief imaginary construction of the contrasting alternatives available to him (one in which he keeps his wares and risks death, the other in which he survives without his wares) will have allowed him to view the prospect of throwing the goods away with a certain measured satisfaction and determination ‘to do what is needed’. This satisfaction and determination in the imagination of throwing the wares overboard and surviving will parallel the proposition ‘it is not worth it to keep these wares’ in its imagined content and the effect on motivation: together, they determine that resolute motivation known as choice.

Similarly, when as philosophers we ask, ‘*why* is this the right choice’, we can recognize that it reflects or embodies those very principles, that very view of the instrumental value of externals arrived at in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I. And this entire course of reasoning is buttressed by the theory of the term ‘good’ as a term designating defining life-activities, from which of course tools are excluded except by human design and decision (for art imitates nature). Here, therefore, we see four mutually explicative levels of thinking – deliberative imagination, deliberative thought, ethical inquiry, and metaphysics – exhibiting ascending levels of explicitness and precision in the treatment of principles. We do not feel the urge to say that because the ‘higher’ orders of thinking are more precise, universal, and explicit they must deal with completely unique objects. We find it quite natural to say that they define more universally and explicitly the same truths which the deliberating voyager grasps quite implicitly with a focus on an immediate practical context. Similarly, we do not feel the need to deny that his deliberate and rationally expressed choice is underlain by an exactly parallel but less sophisticated imaginative grasp of the same balance of concerns.

Again, take the case of the philosopher threatened with political exile. We could

imagine him saying ‘so be it: my philosophy is more important than my political life’ and deciding then and there to stand by his life’s work.²⁵⁰ In doing so, he has not expressed a theory of the relationship between politics and philosophy, as does *EN* X.7-8, let alone has he argued for any metaphysical claims about his resemblance to god by philosophizing and the lower animality of the political life. These arguments are proper to ethics and metaphysics, respectively. And yet they do not necessarily bear *no* relation to his choice. They might (and Aristotle would certainly say they *do*) correctly describe the nature of the activity he feels so committed to as well as the nature of that which he chooses to sacrifice for its sake, organizing them in a hierarchy which corresponds to the priorities he holds in making the choice. If we agree, we might say that they articulate more clearly and explicitly the principles that guided his life-long pursuit of reflection and wonder as his highest priority, the principles that therefore justify his decision at the moment of confrontation. It would clearly be false to say that the deliberation that went into his choice *is* a piece of philosophical theory,²⁵¹ but it would be just as false to claim that it concerns completely different objects and principles than do theories. Rather, theories explicitly unfold the objects and principles implicit in choice all along.²⁵²

A similar relation can hold between the determination ‘my philosophy is more

²⁵⁰ Annie Larie has brought it to my attention that at this point the apparent implications of Aristotle’s ideas about the value of contemplation for happiness are a fairly radical departure from Socrates’ stated justifications for his acceptance of the death penalty in *Apology* (37c-38a) and *Crito*, which implied a philosophical commitment to conversation and to the city’s laws. This is one juncture at which, anticipating the language of Chapter III and our conclusion, we can wonder whether the theoretical direction of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy is a genuine development or a weakening of heroic values.

²⁵¹ This is perhaps most tenable in the case of philosophers, who (in the ancient world at least) make an effort to live explicitly in accordance with their theories. But even in the case of the philosopher, and certainly in the case of the philosopher still looking for a theory, choices can be made and the deliberations that are made in service of these choices are not worth calling ‘theories’.

²⁵² We can add here, against the potential objection, that we accept Achtenberg’s point that the ‘higher’ sciences can treat the same objects as ethics and deliberation also without eliminating the imprecision that is inherent to these objects. As Achtenberg notes (for example, 2002, pp. 90-95), this is the entire point of the way that metaphysics preserves and actually grounds the need for ‘particularism’ in *individual* judgements of value (Section 3a above).

important than my political life' and the imaginative constructions which on our account underlie it. We should not view with suspicion the idea that underlying this statement and the resolution of a tension in values it expresses is the comparative and evaluative imagination of alternative possibilities. The committed philosopher will view the situation of being friendless and retaining the freedom to philosophize with a sense of grim but determined resolve conditioned by his alternate imaginative construction of retaining his political relations but no longer publicly teaching or expressing his thoughts, which inspires in him a sense of shame and regret. As our very language indicates, the rationally expressed judgement is paralleled by subtle imagined constructions and motivations which nonetheless suggest a similar content and elicit parallel motivations.

At several points in the foregoing analysis we paired different forms of thinking (e.g. deliberation, ethics, metaphysics) with corresponding forms of instruction. This is justified by the fact that instruction teaches the rational part of the soul, as we saw in the Chapter I. We may now note at more length that instruction in deliberation is related to philosophical inquiry in the same way as deliberate thought itself to the concepts of philosophical ethics and metaphysics. Aristotle says repeatedly that legislation cannot be studied profitably until one has already learned to deliberate well.²⁵³ It would seem that deliberation is a skill learned before the course of study represented by the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and certainly before the culmination of philosophical education in the *Metaphysics*.²⁵⁴

Aristotle's occasional, isolated comments on the nature of instruction in deliberation seem to reflect this relationship and help us clarify the position of instruction in deliberation.

²⁵³ EN I.3-4 identifies EN as a search for principles which presupposes excellence in the student. The same movement can be detected in EN X.9, as we note in Chapters I and III. Note that this mirrors and overlaps with the claim that good habits must precede instruction and skill in deliberating, which we treat in Chapters I and III.

²⁵⁴ For Aristotle's view on the order of the sciences, see EN VI.7-8, *Meta*.I.1-2, VI.1.

He implies at several points that this instruction happens by way of the transmission of tried and true opinions and effective decision-making habits from experienced to inexperienced men, through the traditional Greek custom of *συνουσία*.²⁵⁵ That is, through the association of young noblemen with their elder role models, a level of deliberative ability is passed on, along with the social values (*νόμοι*) which generally guide deliberation. This ‘instruction’ is not the same as a course in philosophy: it is a transmission of a way of being, a transmission that is identical with ordinary life as it is lived by prudent men. The priorities of mature men are reflected in their approaches to decision-making, the implicit evaluative premises guiding their public deliberations and the sorts of actions they encourage and discourage. The youth absorbs these priorities through association and positive and negative reinforcement, becoming attuned in the process to an entire world of evaluations pertaining to his own life, his society, and its various elements and contexts. This is exactly the kind of transmission we would expect to cultivate the kind of habitual, *ad hoc* skill which we have claimed deliberation to be.

Although this process is very different from a course in philosophy, we can surmise that it introduces the novice into certain matters of life which a course in philosophy can later help them understand on principle. If our account of the relationship between philosophical theory and deliberation in Aristotle is correct, the various evaluative priorities that are encountered in an *ad hoc*, associative, implicit, essentially active, practical, performative and situational way, in *συνουσία*, reflect the theses of philosophical ethics and metaphysics about

²⁵⁵ See Hadot (1995, pg. 13). We read this practice as reflected in the *EN* VI.11 chapter on *σύνεσις*, the ability to understand the judgements of others. And also in *EN* I.3-4 where it is assumed that the audience is excellent on the basis of its *experience* in practical matters. A more direct resonance is perhaps found in the comment that a training in excellence arises from the ‘living together with’ good men (*συζῆν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς*) (*EN* IX.9.1170a10). Other classical philosophical appropriations of the concept are found in the entire genre of Socratic dialogue, in which it was common to claim that association with Socrates made young men better. The idea is implicit in many of the commentaries we have been considering, especially on habituation, but has not been noted explicitly in them.

the different orders of values. The philosophically articulated analogies of value we described in Section 3 will be encountered in the moments of decision that reflect the existential priorities of a culture, and its mature and eminent members in particular, the imprecise evaluative statements they use to express them, and the acclimatization of the younger members to them.

In addition to the rational education in decision-making habits cultivated by partially expressed rationales, we should also expect that an education in deliberation would involve an education of the imaginative faculty. For as we have emphasized, deliberation makes use of imagination in an important way to make decisions. But here we might seem to have a problem: imagination, like perception, belongs to the irrational soul. But instruction applies to the rational soul. How can deliberative *instruction* educate imagination?

We can respond to this worry in two ways. One path is to note that deliberative imagination is of course deliberative or calculative (βουλευτικὸν ἢ λογιστικόν). That is to say that it is not purely irrational. It is an element of the soul which ‘listens’ to reason. This has in fact been presupposed by our interpretation of how it works: deliberate thought will often prompt us to imagine another aspect of the situation at hand or an option alternative to the one we have been considering. There is reason to believe that when Aristotle speaks generically of deliberation, he has in mind this sort of symbiotic relationship between thought and imagination in appraising a situation. We can therefore also assume that a rational education in deliberation is not purely rational but has immediate effects on the imaginative capacities of the ‘student’. If a youth is encouraged to consider something subtle in a situation which he might not have noticed otherwise, for example how his rash action will affect his age mates, there is no way to isolate this statement and thought from the image that corresponds to it - it is simultaneously an invitation to imagine how his actions affect others. This is implied by the

parallelism between thought and image which we articulated earlier: just as thoughts are grounded in images, so thoughts can prompt images.

A second and simultaneous path is to maintain that imagination is *also* educated by pre-rational means, i.e. by habituation. We will touch on this in Chapter III but for now we can note the basic idea. Habituation gives imagination a vast store of noble and base actions, as well as a tendency to love the noble and despise the base. These actions, as well as the situations in which they were performed and which helped define their nobility or baseness, bear general and specific similarities to new situations and possible actions. This allows imagination to spontaneously generate evaluatively-charged images of possible actions and appraisals of situations, as well as to generate them by the guidance of rational thoughts about the situation.²⁵⁶ Deliberative reason and instruction presupposes and makes use of this evaluatively charged store of imaginative tendencies in advising imagination to develop them in specific ways relative to the situation. This touches on the more symbiotic understanding of obedience and command, instruction and habituation, we called for - and we must stop short until the next chapter. For now we simply suggest that deliberative instruction can educate imagination to aid rational deliberation, but also relies on a prior cultivation of imaginative habits.

Conclusion

We have completed our account of the rational element or aspect of choice – deliberation – and the form of instruction that teaches it. Deliberation is the effort to identify which action, among the actions up to us in a definite situation, best instantiates εὐδαιμονία. It does so by imaginatively and rationally constructing each of these possible actions in light

²⁵⁶ See *EE* VII.14 for the idea of spontaneous, non-deliberate excellent activity. We comment on the passage in detail in Chapter III, Section 3.

of the various expressions of εὐδαιμονία it recognizes as valid in general and relevant to the situation. Because εὐδαιμονία is a metaphysically defined principle with complex elements related to one another hierarchically and analogically, this imaginative construction typically allows the deliberator to decide on an action that is unambiguously good, without contradicting the plurality and variability of what is valuable in general and in each situation. This ability to deliberate well is inculcated at a level of thinking and instruction prior to any explicitly philosophical instruction and inquiry. Through living everyday life under the influence of mature members of society, the youth is acclimatized to a thoroughly practical, *ad hoc* way of constructing activities, recognizing and setting priorities, and solving problems. These skills involve an implicit awareness of the same values as are defined more clearly, precisely and universally in philosophical inquiries. The reader will remember, however, that deliberation is only one side of the psychological account of choice and will have noticed that at several points we had to defer a settled account of its precise scope and function until that ‘other side’ is clarified. This is the task of the next chapter, which will try to understand the habitual cognition of principles of deliberation, its role in guiding deliberation and effective choice, the form of education that inculcates it, and that education’s relationship to instruction in deliberation.

Chapter III: Habitual Excellence and Habituation: The Nature and Cultivation of Noble Habits

In Chapter I we formulated our core and guiding question. It was: how do good habits prepare the soul for excellence? We set up our answer to this question through the psychology of excellence and of choice in particular. We found on the one hand that full moral excellence is the harmony of rational and irrational functions, in their respective perfections as excellent command (prudence) and strict and attentive obedience (moral excellence in the narrow sense). We also found that the psychology of the commanding, rational soul itself involved a similar harmony: excellent, prudent choice demands the right intention of the end of life by moral excellence in a narrow sense as well as the skillful ability to calculate or deliberate about how to achieve that end.

Now habits reside in the irrational soul and its perfection in moral excellence narrowly. We therefore found that to answer the question of how habituation prepares for excellence means to understand this irrational soul's function and perfection in choice and obedience. Our question became several questions: what is the irrational 'intention' of the end of life? How does this intention guide deliberation in excellent choice? How does it make possible the obedience of desire and feeling to excellent choices? The answer to our question about habituation is to be inferred from the answers to these questions about the psychological status of habits.

In Chapter II we approached these questions obliquely, through an interpretation of the distinctly rational element of choice: deliberation. We gave an account of how deliberation works to discover which particular available action in a situation is 'best'. We found that it does so by imaginatively constructing and thinking each action in the light of a general, analogical and hierarchical idea of happiness as the life of excellence. This idea of happiness

is defined in metaphysics, ethics and the other sciences, and deliberation thinks and imagines it less precisely and for practice. Instruction in deliberation, likewise, is an enculturation process which transmits this *ad hoc* skill in imagining, thinking and achieving ‘what is best’.

Because deliberation is only one psychological aspect of choice and its most rational one, some significant difficulties remained which reflected our need for a definition of the converse aspect of choice, namely habits. For example, what exactly is deliberated about and chosen? We showed that it is natural and plausible to think that only particular actions fall under the scope of deliberation but saw that the idea has been contested by those who claim that deliberation can ‘unfold a concept of happiness’ and specify its general content. This difficulty can perhaps be approached through a more explicit study of the function of habits in choice. For if Aristotle implicitly or explicitly characterizes the nature and scope of the object of habitual intention of happiness, this simultaneously fixes the inverse scope of deliberation, which works on its basis.

Two related questions concerned the idea of the ‘imaginative syntheses’ which we argued must underlie every rationally expressed choice which claims to best instantiate happiness. If the imaginative discovery of the best choice is non-rational in itself, how are we to understand it as the instantiation of a prior principle? The answer depends on some understanding of how happiness is grasped as a principle non-rationally, i.e. by habit, and how habit guides imaginative constructions. And again, if imaginative tendencies and capacities are not educated entirely by rational methods, and nonetheless are responsive to rational directions, how does non-rational education - habituation - prepare them for their harmonious functioning in deliberation?

As we have suggested, these problems and our initial questions about habitual

education are to be solved through an interpretation of the other psychological element of prudent choice and moral excellence, namely habitual excellence. This is the subject of the present chapter. We approach it in three main stages. First we ask the basic questions: what is a habit? What are the good habits which habitual education produces? We answer these questions in two steps. First (Section 1) we argue that habits are primarily tendencies of wish. Wishes are very general desires to which a general category of activity appears as one's goal, before deliberation. Good habits are *correct* wishes, which we reason must be a kind of primitive, pre-rational fixing of the mind upon the general principles of happiness and their intermediate realization.

In a second step (Section 2) we make this definition more concrete by studying how the first general transformation of motivations in habitual education happens and at what it aims. Habitual education transforms 'base', private, low, easy, short-sighted motivations into 'noble', expansive, and difficult motivations by making the young man's sense of self-esteem (pride) contingent upon his ability to overcome what is base in himself for the sake of what is noble. We infer that habitually excellent wish is at this crucial stage some kind of loosely heroic tendency to pride oneself on the difficulty and expansiveness of one's actions and motivations, inseparable from a desire for social distinction.

In a third and final stage (Section 3) we ask how these noble motivations are supposed to prepare the soul for a rational education in excellence. Aristotle hints that they make it possible for arguments about excellence to take hold because these arguments move the soul farther 'on the path' on which its noble motivations already place it. We formulate a hypothesis of how pre-rational noble motivations ground rational wish, deliberate choice and obedient desire, designed to make this physical analogy intelligible. We suggest that the love of the

noble orients the soul to a basic characteristic (‘nobility’) which is coextensive with happiness and excellence at every level. The love of the noble ensures that the noble youth is drawn to this characteristic, cognitively and affectively, and will recognize it and take it up as its own and meriting its noble pride in each of these more advanced cognitive and affective dimensions of excellence. We let this remain a hypothesis, although we do allow ourselves to speculate on how it functions to explain each of these stages of rational choice and excellent desire and make suggestions as to how these speculations can be tested in future work.

Section 1: Habits are Dispositions of Wish

As we have seen, habituation produces excellence of character by disposing the irrational soul to desire and feel correctly and in obedience to reason. In *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1-4, Aristotle argues that this is achieved by the repeated performance of the sorts of actions that excellent people do and having those same desires and feelings. A passage from *Eudemian Ethics* epitomizes this sentiment: “Excellence, too, is the sort of disposition (διάθεσις) which is generated by the best movements of the soul, and from which are done (πράττεται) the soul’s best works and feelings (ἔργα καὶ πάθη).”²⁵⁷ The activities characteristic of excellence lead to the disposition to desire, feel and act as is characteristic of excellence. The prudent educator or legislator (ὁ νομοθέτης) commands by the authority of his person or the law that excellent actions be done, simultaneously disposing his charges or subjects to act, desire and feel excellently.²⁵⁸ Now from such passages read in isolation, we might develop the idea that

²⁵⁷ *EE* II.1.1220a25-30. The context shows that the reference is to excellence of character and that the other dispositions produced by the best motions of the capacities of which they are the dispositions are health and strength – excellences of the body.

²⁵⁸ The legislator is identified with the educator at *Pol.* VII.13.1332b10. The connection also becomes apparent throughout *EN* X.9, to which we shall turn immediately. *EN* X.9.1180a20 states that the law is a reason proceeding from a sort of prudence and insight (λόγος ὦν ἀπὸ τινος φρονήσεως καὶ νοῦ).

habituation is a mechanical, behaviorist process whereby the soul learns to do what it becomes used to doing. But as we saw in Chapter I, a thorough understanding of Aristotle's psychology corrects this error.

As we have said, habituation works on the 'irrational' part of the soul. Aristotle frequently refers to this as the desiring soul (ἡ ὁρεξις), and also characterizes it as spirit, appetite, passion and wish.²⁵⁹ But as we have seen, these motivational and affective characteristics are complemented by specifically non-rational grades of cognition, namely perception and imagination. We have also accepted Jessica Moss' interpretation of these faculties, on which they are inherently motivating evaluations of objects and activities as good or bad. Good objects and actions are perceived in a perceptual act that sees them as a goal, an act which is pleasurable and which directly conditions or even is equivalent with a warming of the heart and a desire to attain or engage in them. The inverse statements hold of bad objects, actions, and the motivating perceptions of them. As we have been putting it, habits therefore are cognitive, and not merely mechanical. As tendencies to desire, feel and act well they involve or even are equivalent with tendencies to perceive correctly, perceive the good as good and the bad as bad.

We can now add that motivations - desires and aversions for certain types of activities as good or as bad - are most important here, insofar as the major functions of habit either are forms of desire (appetite, wish) or are conditioned by desires (passion, spirit, the tendency to act). This is indicated already by Aristotle's term for the irrational soul, 'that which desires', but can be shown more thoroughly. This is easiest in the case of the disposition to act. A person who performs excellent actions as a rule is not yet excellent.²⁶⁰ Excellence requires the settled

²⁵⁹ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b20-25; *EN* II.5.1105b20; *EE* II.2.1220b10.

²⁶⁰ *EN* II.4.1105a15-1105b1.

disposition to *choose* those actions for their own sake (moral character in the widest sense).²⁶¹ Choice, however, as we have seen, is a form of desire and is in human beings the last psychological disposition conditioning action. The disposition to act well therefore depends upon the disposition to choose well, which is a form of desire. And this in turn, as we have seen, relies on a narrower sense of correct desire, the correct intention of the end of action, which Aristotle identifies with non-rational moral excellence in a narrow sense. The disposition to act well therefore depends on the tendency to desire the right ends or goals of action, and this is more directly the goal of habituation than is the disposition to act well.

A similar statement can be made about the relationship of passions to desires. Jessica Moss and Deborah Achtenberg have argued at length that Aristotle understands emotions or feelings (*πάθη*) and their attendant forms of pleasure and pain as equivalent to or at least consequent upon perceptions of particular actions and events as good or bad.²⁶² Thus anger, for example, involves the perception that someone has done wrong, to ourselves or others we love. We should also note that Aristotle's descriptions of the various emotions often involve references to desires - thus anger, more fully described, is the desire to revenge a perceived wrong, and emulation or envy is the desire to attain for oneself something good which one perceives in another. We can add, though, that to understand these feelings and the desires they involve seems to involve positing previous and more general desires for objects perceived or imagined as good. Thus I can have a generalized desire for justice, which I perceive as a good, and this desire results in the angry emotions of indignation - a kind of pain when I perceive that someone has received good things without merit - and righteous satisfaction when I see

²⁶¹ I have combined the second and third conditions he puts on the possession of excellence of character at *EN* II.4.1105a30.

²⁶² Achtenberg, 2002, pp.159-178. Moss, 2012, pp. 69-99, esp. 75-84.

that they have received justified punishment. The same goes for envy - to desire another's good is dependent on desiring that good in general terms for myself. Passions in general and their particular manifestations therefore seem to depend and follow on pleasant desires for and painful aversions to more general sorts of activities, objects and occurrences perceived or imagined as good or bad.²⁶³ To condition the soul to habitually feel in a certain way in certain situations (for example, angry at insults) depends therefore on conditioning the soul to have such general habitual patterns of motivation (for example, valuing honor and justice).

Habitual excellence of character therefore seems to be primarily a settled and general disposition of motivation, and secondarily a tendency to feel and act in specific ways. This primacy of motivations for habits is consistent with the psychological analysis of choice we made in Chapter I. There we found that moral excellence in the narrow sense - the product of habituation - is to have a pre-rational, pre-deliberative correct view or appearance of the end for which one acts. We found that this correct view provides for and is expressed by such general statements as constitute the starting-points of deliberation, the universal premises of practical syllogisms. Such are statements like 'honor is superior to mere pleasure' or 'true honor belongs to the excellent', or in other words statements expressive of what the speaker considers to be the overall goal of life.²⁶⁴ In Chapter II we found that such statements and the deliberations that take them as their starting points express a universal, hierarchical but analogical idea of happiness as excellent activity and the goal of life. Habitual excellence in the narrow sense therefore appears to be some pre-rational 'view' or 'aim' (σκοπός) on this

²⁶³ Thomas Aquinas has made just this point (*Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics*, II.III.269), claiming that pleasant and painful feelings are functions of the appetitive of desiderative faculty's pursuance or avoidance of objects as good or bad, plus the perceived presence or absence of such objects. It is worth noting that in this general theory of desire and aversion as perceptions and thoughts of present and absent goods and evils, and of positive and negative emotions as consequent on them, Aristotle anticipates the Stoic theory of these same terms. (see, for example, Epictetus' *Discourses*, 2.17.17-18.)

²⁶⁴ EN I.5.

idea of happiness which guides all rational deliberation.

We called this ‘view’ the intention of the end, but the language in which it is described parallels the language Aristotle uses to describe ‘wish’ (βούλησις).²⁶⁵ Aristotle defines wish as desire for the end as the apparent good (τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν). In particular, good or correct wish is for what appears as good to the man of good character, whose object of wish coincides with what is in truth and by nature good, because he discriminates rightly (κρίνει ὀρθῶς) and sees the truth (ὁρᾷν τὰληθές) in each thing. Aristotle further suggests that a man’s wishes, as opposed to his actions and deliberate choices, are not subject to his direct control,²⁶⁶ a fact very close to the repeated distinction between excellence of character’s grasp of the end and rational deliberation’s determination of what is ‘up to us’. Thus we see the functions of wish and habitual excellence converge, and we suppose that to wish for something is to have a pre-deliberative view of it as the end or goal of life. To have good habits appears to be to have a general, pre-deliberative wish for excellent activity as happiness, as the analogical and hierarchical principle of the good life.

We will clarify in more detail what this means in the next section but can begin by noting a significant difference between this habitual wish and another function of the desiring soul, namely appetite (ἐπιθυμία) or impulse (ὁρμή). This distinction is registered in key passages in which Aristotle considers so-called ‘natural excellence’ (ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετή). In one such passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.13 we read:

Everyone thinks that each type of character is possessed in some sense by nature, for right from birth we are just or temperate or brave or anything else; but nonetheless we seek some other, ruling good, and to possess these qualities in another way. For both children and brutes possess the natural dispositions, but without thought (νοῦ) these [dispositions] seem to be harmful. But we seem to see this much: that, just as a strong (ἰσχυρός) body that moves without sight will stumble strongly (ἰσχυρῶς) on account of lacking sight, so also in this case: if a person acquires

²⁶⁵ *EN* III.4. See also throughout III.5, especially 1114b1-25.

²⁶⁶ *EN* III.5.1113b1-10. Indirect control over wish is asserted through the medium of control over deliberate choice at 1114a1-20, 1114b1-15.

thought it makes a difference in action, and his disposition, while like how it was, will then be ruling excellence.²⁶⁷

This account is paralleled in the *Magna Moralia*, where we read that natural excellences are “some sort of impulses in the individual, without reason (οἷον ὁρμαί τινος ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἄνευ λόγου)”, and that they exist apart from “reason and choice”.²⁶⁸ Now we know that to say these impulses are ‘without reason or choice’ or ‘without thought’ is not to say that they are completely indiscriminate impulses. Like all movements of the soul, they possess their own kind of discrimination. They lack the specific cognitive faculty of deliberation and its perfection in prudence, however, for this is the entire point of the *Nicomachean Ethics* passage. This is also implied by Aristotle’s statement that we have natural excellence in common with children and animals.²⁶⁹ For we are told that children and animals do not think about their actions and therefore cannot benefit from rational instruction to become prudent; on the contrary they move by irrational passions.²⁷⁰ As we have seen, irrational motivations and passions are occasioned by perceptions and imaginations of objects under the aspect of pleasure or pain, good or bad.

But on our account wish and its corresponding mode of aversion also involves a pre-rational appearance of an object as good or bad which causes pleasure or pain. This is therefore not enough to distinguish wish from impulse. The distinction must come from understanding the specific character of this appearance and its corresponding motivation: how do the differing objects of wish and of impulse differentiate these species of desire? We can infer an answer from Aristotle’s explanation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* passage above of why natural impulses

²⁶⁷ *EN* VI.13.1144b1-10.

²⁶⁸ *MM* I.34.1197b35-1198a5.

²⁶⁹ *EN* VI.13.1144b5.

²⁷⁰ *EN* I.3.1095a1-10, III.2.1111b5-15.

and excellences, because devoid of prudence, are insufficient for full excellence. In that passage Aristotle claims that natural excellences make errors without the guidance of thought in the same way a strong body stumbles strongly on account of its strength and lack of sight. The addition of thought perfects natural excellence into ruling excellence (ἀρετὴ κυριός), which makes no errors.²⁷¹ In the idea of ruling excellence we see an implicit reference to choice. For we have seen in Chapter I that choice is the principle of action and that this sometimes leads Aristotle to describe it as the 'lord' (κυριός) of action. We have also seen (Chapters I and II) that excellent choice selects the best available action, the one that best achieves the end(s) of action, and that this action is always an 'intermediate' between extremes, always obeys the limitations intrinsic to the end(s) as well as to the situation. The very idea of ἀρετὴ κυριός therefore contains a reference to the doctrine of the mean: ruling excellence is excellence that can reliably hit upon the intermediate action.²⁷²

This means that the errors of natural excellence, the strong impulse that stumbles strongly, are to be described as extremes. Deborah Achtenberg has explained the idea of the intermediate and the extremes in action admirably and we have already made use of this explanation (Chapter II.3a). We saw that extreme tendencies are not so much those which are particularly vigorous as those which are excessively specific and fixed in advance of concrete situations. The person who tends to give without discrimination and takes pleasure in this as good is not liberal but profligate, and the person who scorns danger in all forms and always charges into battle is not courageous but rash. We can now recognize that these extreme actions

²⁷¹ The fact that this excellence never errs is implied by the idea of the unity of the excellences in prudence (*EN* VI.1144b30-35), as we discussed in Chapter II.4b.

²⁷² The thesis that ruling excellence makes no errors because it involves prudence and the grasp of the intermediate is further confirmed by Aristotle's definition of it slightly later as 'the disposition in accordance with (and implying the presence of) right reason' (*EN* VI.13.1144b20-25), for 'right reason' is one of Aristotle's formulas for the idea of the intermediate and prudence (*EN* VI.1.1138b15-30).

are the product of a certain form of character. The profligate person loves to give and has little awareness of some other, more complex goal that might qualify or limit his impulse to give. The rash person loves to fight and has few limitations on his urge to charge into battle.²⁷³ In ordinary speech, as Aristotle repeatedly notes, we may still call these extreme cases by the name of the corresponding virtue. For liberality is distinguished most readily by the readiness to give and courage by the readiness to face danger. In other words, we say that someone has a ‘natural excellence’ when they have a strong and consistent impulse to the general sorts of actions which characterize the excellence we name them after.²⁷⁴ This interpretation is confirmed by Aristotle’s playful statement that such men are *strong* and therefore stumble *strongly*: the strong impulse to a specific type of action, even if typically good, will produce errors.

If the object of a naturally excellent impulse is a specific type of action (e.g. giving or fighting) then what is the object of habitually excellent wish? We can infer our answer from the idea of the prudential choice of the mean which perfects natural excellence. Prudence chooses the action which is good and intermediate in a particular situation. We have found prudence to include good deliberation, but not to be restricted to skill in deliberating. For good deliberation leads to a choice selecting the best possible manifestation of the hierarchically organized ends of life which are set before deliberation by excellent wish, good moral character in the narrow sense. In other words, prudence has a pre-rational in addition to a deliberative element. A passage from the *Eudemian Ethics* gives some hint as to its object. In the midst of a passage which we have cited earlier as an example of the clear analysis of choice into the

²⁷³ At *EN* III.8.1116b25-1117a1 Aristotle makes the point very clear by contrasting the ‘courage’ of angry or spirited beasts with that of men, even stating explicitly that the former would be courage ‘if choice and that for the sake of which were added’ (1117a1).

²⁷⁴ *EN* II.9.1109a1-15.

right intention of the end by excellence in the narrow sense and skillful deliberation about how to achieve the end, we read that “that which is intermediate is therefore that for the sake of which, and excellence is responsible for this by choosing for the sake of this.”²⁷⁵ This language is echoed in certain passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where we read that excellence in the narrow sense ‘aims at’ (στοχαστική) what is intermediate,²⁷⁶ and that excellent choice heightens or relaxes activity in accordance with this aim.²⁷⁷ It appears that at least part of what habitually excellent wish has in view as its object is the mean itself, and that this is part of that aim (σκοπός) from which excellent men begin their every deliberation and for the sake of which they do and choose everything.²⁷⁸

This allows us to make a step in understanding what it would mean to have a pre-deliberative view of the general analogical principle of happiness as excellence. For in Chapter II.3a we argued that the rule ‘do what is intermediate’, which is typically expressed in statements like ‘do what is needed, in the way it is needed, etc.’, is best understood as a very compressed statement invoking the analogical relationships which hold between all the individually excellent actions. Each excellent action achieves the ends of life as fully as possible in the given situation, or in other words ‘as is needed’ by the situation and its concrete limitations on and specifications of the pursuit of happiness. Rushing into battle, retreating, standing one’s ground - all these actions express courage because depending on the situation each of them is aimed effectively at victory, which secures leisure and happiness for the city. Distributing evenly and giving more to the excellent are both manifestations of justice depending on what is appropriate in the situation and whether the goal of this particular

²⁷⁵ οὗ μὲν οὖν ἕνεκα τὸ μέσον ἐστίν, οὗ αἰτία ἡ ἀρετὴ τῷ προαιρεῖσθαι οὗ ἕνεκα. *EE* II.11.1227b35.

²⁷⁶ *EN* II.6.1106b25

²⁷⁷ *EN* II.6.1106b5-10 by comparison to craft activity; *EN* VI.1.1138b25.

²⁷⁸ Our phrasing invokes *EN* VI.5.1140b15.

distribution is to satisfy a wrong or to recognize eminent virtue. Throwing goods overboard, waiting to examine the intensity of the storm, and keeping the goods as they are - each expresses prudence depending on what the situation requires and what is likely to achieve the most value or end in ruin. In each individual domain general rules can be formulated to describe what is most typically needed, and these can be generalized further into the doctrine of the intermediate itself.

The idea, then, is that excellent wish will approach each specific situation with a general determination to 'do what is needed' or 'to achieve happiness as best as the situation allows'. To return to a concrete example from Chapter II, the excellent general goes to war with the goal of securing by courageous military action a victory which promotes his city's peace, leisure and happiness. He encounters every situation with his eye, his *wish* firmly fixed on this goal and is determined to do 'what is needed' or 'what the situation demands' for its achievement. This goal influences his deliberation at every moment, and we have already seen that it may recommend very different actions depending on the situation. We can now see that this is in large part due to its inherent generality and complexity. Something similar is true of every domain of excellence - for example the way that the 'rule' 'pursue the good on the basis of material security' influences the assessment of 'what is needed' made by the merchant who throws his wares overboard. Compare the generality of these wishes to the specificity of the natural excellences. The naturally courageous soldier comes to battle seeking to distinguish himself by his ability to fight, and he accordingly seeks opportunities to fight. Or again, the person who is fair-minded (but not just) might tend to give everyone equal shares and will thus always act on the opportunity to redistribute even the riches of those who are eminent in excellence. The objects of habitual wish are more general, complex and nuanced than those of

naturally excellent impulse. They transcend and include all specific forms of action and feeling which might be excellent in specific domains and individual situations. They are complex forms of intelligence for complex kinds of goals not easily summarized except by highly abstract rules like ‘do what is in accordance with excellence’, ‘do what is intermediate’ or ‘achieve the best instantiation of happiness’, which only gesture towards the hierarchical and analogical relationships that hold between the individual actions which satisfy them.²⁷⁹

In a way this only touches on the subject, and in the rest of this chapter we will clarify these pre-deliberative views on the principle of happiness and the way they guide good deliberation a little more thoroughly. But first we must briefly respond to an objection. We have said that wish is pre-deliberative, and this seems to be required by its clear functional parallel to the narrow moral excellence which sets the ends of deliberation. But we have also spoken of it as *pre-rational*, as conditioned by imagination and perception rather than by thought. There is indeed compelling reason to speak of it in this way. For the narrow moral excellence which sets the ends of action is assigned to the irrational soul which responds to reason, and we have argued that this is functionally equivalent with wish. In one passage Aristotle even explicitly lists wish among the functions of the irrational soul.²⁸⁰ And Jessica

²⁷⁹ Aristotle is far from absolutely consistent in assigning the grasp of the end and the intermediate to habitual excellence in *opposition* to natural excellence (*EN* VII.5.1148b15-1149a1, 8.1151a15, X.9.1179b10; *EE* VII.14.1247b15-35, 1248a15-35; *MM* I.34.1198a20). Our interpretation, especially once completed in the next sections, can help explain why. On our account, the naturally excellent impulses are often correct. A person who had naturally correct impulses in many or all of the domains of excellence would therefore be very close to aiming at the mean: he would as a rule aim at what prudence typically, but not always, recommends. On our view, habitual wish grasps the general order of value - happiness and excellence - which makes these individual impulses typically correct and which is already implicit in what their goals instantiate, when correct. Furthermore, if this habitual wish is developed on the basis of the performance of just these sorts of particular actions, the youth will develop these natural impulses *before* the habitual wish that thus generalizes to the intermediate and happiness on their basis. This is the process of ‘practical induction’ defended by Moss (2012, pp. 200-233) and Achtenberg (2002, pp. 133-142), which we treat below. On this interpretation, it is a point of relatively fine nuance whether the end is given by the natural impulses or habitual wish - in fact it is given by habitual wish on the basis of the natural impulses. This might explain Aristotle’s occasional equivocation on this question.

²⁸⁰ *Pol.* VII.15.1334b20.

Moss has convinced us in her argument that the language of the end ‘appearing’ to moral excellence and to wish can and perhaps should be read as a technical reference to imagination rather than a general equivalent to thought-related language.²⁸¹

And yet wish is typically interpreted as a rational function. This, too, is not arbitrary. We have seen, after all, that it plays the important function of providing the starting points of deliberation or rational calculation. These are expressed as propositions in language, apparently a property of thought. Aristotle occasionally even places it explicitly in the calculative soul.²⁸² This has led some to suggest that wish is some kind of noetic thought which rationally grasps the first principles of calculative thought, much as how the principles of theoretical science are inferred from experience as starting points of demonstration.²⁸³ More support for the rationality of wish lies in the complexity of its object. It is difficult to see how wish can orient us to something as complex as the hierarchical and analogical structure of happiness without being rational and linguistic.

We can do no better at present in solving these difficulties than to cite and adopt the solution of Jessica Moss.²⁸⁴ Moss urges us to take the apparent fact that Aristotle recognizes something like a pre-rational, habitually excellent wish for the general end(s) of life, perceived and imagined as good, on face value. She then offers an interpretation of how we can accommodate for this point. As we recognized in Chapter II.4a, every rational thought is underlain by a φαντασία parallel in content. Rational thought thinks the forms that are present already in sub-rational images. It seems possible, therefore, that wish is indeed rational, and does indeed grasp the principles of deliberation. But this does not conflict with Aristotle’s

²⁸¹ See for example 2012, pp. 159-161.

²⁸² *DA* III.9.432b5, 10.433a20.

²⁸³ Thus Achtenberg (2002, pp. 133-142) on the support of *EN* VI 11.1143a25-1143b5.

²⁸⁴ See especially 2012, pp. 138-140. The point is substantiated throughout part III of her book, however.

tendency to state that pre-rational excellent habits of motivation provide a general appearance of the end of action, i.e. of happiness. These pre-rational tendencies would underlie wish and provide wish with its content. Wish would then merely ‘take up’ this content and express it rationally and in language, making it suitable as the starting-point(s) of calculation. This thought is coherent with the general overlapping parallelism we recognized between forms of Aristotelian cognition in Chapter II.5.

Moss is the first to admit that her interpretation (which she calls Aristotle’s ‘practical empiricism’) goes beyond the bounds of explicit assertion: Aristotle does not offer a detailed psychological account of such a relationship between a rational and pre-rational form of wish. But as we have tried to indicate, her conjecture does make sense of the apparent functional equivalence of wish with the pre-rational orientation to the end of life without doing away with the rationality of wish. In the rest of this chapter we will largely take Moss’ psychological work for granted and will focus more on her and our own claims about the content of non-rational wish, although by doing so we will perhaps add to the plausibility of positing this sort of wish in the first place.

Section 2: Habitually Excellent Wish as the Love of the Noble: its Nature and Genesis

We have therefore claimed that habituation primarily develops excellent motivations, forming a pre-rational excellent wish. This is an inherently pleasurable and motivating orientation to true happiness as the good - a complex, hierarchical and analogical principle of the goodness of any life, activity and action. Such a wish, including the desire to achieve this object in the best way possible (the principle of the intermediate), precedes and guides the excellent agent’s rational formulation of his wishes as well as his deliberation about how to act. The object of this wish transcends all particular interests in good actions and dispositions

but includes them, for each is known and chosen as good in accordance with it.

We have seen that the texts seem to suggest as much, but at the same time we have not said much of concrete value about the content and specific cognitive mode of excellent wish. We have gestured towards the idea of what is intermediate, but as Aristotle himself notes this is not very helpful in itself.²⁸⁵ As we have interpreted it, the rule ‘do what is needed, in the way it is needed’ is defined relative to happiness; to do what is intermediate is to do what the situation demands for the realization of happiness. Happiness is more directly the goal of action than ‘what is intermediate’, which is more of a specification of the way it must be pursued in contingent and variable human life. In Chapter II we of course gave an interpretation of how happiness is defined philosophically, and we also gestured towards the way that deliberate thought and imagination is aware of it. But we did not do so with great focus on exactly what it means to ‘aim at’ this principle with a pre-rational and pre-deliberative desire. How is excellent wish to be understood ‘from the inside’, so to speak, as a desire for happiness?

To some extent, this question is beyond Aristotle’s explicit interest and even his method. We have determined that it is a valid question by cleaving rigorously to the Aristotelian psychology of choice and its implications for understanding habits. Nonetheless, several of Aristotle’s most concrete comments about habitual education in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II and X.9 show evidence of an implicit concept of the inner life of excellent habits - their object, cognitive mode, and motivational and affective qualities. In the present section we take steps to reconstruct this concept. In Section 3 we try to show how it guides explicitly rational instruction, deliberation, choice, and obedient desire - in short how it prepares for the whole of excellence.

²⁸⁵ EN VI.1.25-30.

Our first step is to introduce a new terminology in characterizing excellent wish. At four points in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 Aristotle refers to this excellent pattern of motivation which must precede and guide argument and decision, but in terms we have not yet seen:

[Arguments about excellence only have power for] the free (ἐλευθερίους) among the young, [...] a character well-born (εὐγενές) and a true lover of what is noble (ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλον) [...] (1179b5)²⁸⁶

[Before teachings about excellence can be effective] the soul of the student must first have been cultivated (προδιδεργασθαι) by habits for rejoicing and hating nobly (τὸ καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μίσειν) [...] (1179b20-25).

The character then must somehow already be there with a kinship to excellence, loving what is noble and hating what is base (στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ दुξχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρόν). [1179b25-30].

Some think that legislators ought to exhort men to excellence and urge them forward for the sake of the noble (τοῦ καλοῦ χάριν), on the assumption that those who have been well advanced by the formation of habits will attain to such influences [...]. A good man, they think, since he lives for what is noble (πρὸς τὸ καλόν), will submit to argument (λογῶ) [...] (1180a5-10).

In these passages, to which we will return in more detail in the next section, Aristotle states that habituation disposes the soul to love what is noble and to hate what is base, to live for the sake of what is noble, before all argument or generally reasoning about what is excellent. When we ask about the nature of pre-rational excellent wish we are asking: what is it to love what is noble? This is the question we will try to answer through interpreting Aristotle's comments on how habitual education works to generate noble motivations.

We are aided substantially in this project by the work of Jessica Moss, which we accept in its general conclusions.²⁸⁷ On a general reading of *Nicomachean Ethics* II Moss rests the

²⁸⁶ When interpreting X.9 I follow Myles Burnyeat (1980, pg. 89, note 7 to pg. 75) in supposing that when Aristotle speaks about the εὐγενής who has noble habits of love and hatred, he is not supposing these qualities to be purely natural. Even though this passage seems to suggest that noble and base tendencies are 'by nature', to emphasize this point plainly contradicts Aristotle's entire theory of education. It is probably best to think of motivational tendencies as in some sense natural but as largely cemented, reinforced and generally altered by habit. On this point see also our note 278 above on the relation between natural impulse and habitual wish.

²⁸⁷ Moss' account of habituation is found in the last part of her book (2012, pp. 200-235). Moss translates τὸ καλόν as 'what is fine', a translation which does capture the dual meanings of good and beautiful. We prefer 'noble' because of the term's clearer evocation of archaic virtues, as will become apparent in what follows.

uncontroversial claim that habituation generates a general love of the noble by getting the youth to perform particular noble actions. Her novel claim is about how this works, especially its cognitive aspect. Moss argues that all pleasure is pleasure in the perception of things good, especially one's own activity.²⁸⁸ All pre-rational motivations, as we saw, stem from this kind of perceptual pleasure. Moss adds crucially that Aristotle recognizes a specifically *noble* pleasure (and accordingly a pre-rational noble motivation) in a specific kind of perceiving-good.²⁸⁹ To summarize, she shows that noble pleasure is a kind of pride, a pleasure taken in perceiving oneself as excellent, as possessing what is intrinsically valuable and noble. She connects this rightly to Aristotelian greatness of soul (μεγαλωψυχία).²⁹⁰ This excellence is the crown or ordered totality (κόσμος) of all excellence in that it is a deserved demand for the greatest possible honors on the basis of the possession of all the individual excellences. The great-souled man takes a kind of pride in the (perceived) fact of his own complete excellence and demands supreme honor to match this full possession of everything of intrinsic value.

Moss suggests that this extreme expression of pride can help us understand the habituation process, which must make use of more limited and nascent forms of noble pleasure and noble motivation. Habitual education gets the youth to perform noble actions in order to get him to see them as noble and accordingly take pride in doing them, take pleasure in possessing their intrinsic value. Similarly, the nobly educated youth will develop specifically noble motivations; he will see noble actions in others and as possibilities for himself with a kind of anticipation of pride in the noble, a pleasurable desire to possess what is noble for

²⁸⁸ 2012 pp. 201-206.

²⁸⁹ 2012, pp. 206-219. Aside from passages like the ones we have already cited (and others like them) which attest to a specific form of noble motivation and pleasure, Moss bases this claim on a detailed reading (pp. 212-219) of passages from *EN* IX.9 on pleasure in perceiving one's friend as another self.

²⁹⁰ 2012, pg. 216, note 30. Moss notes that Aristotle does not explicitly acknowledge the more general pride underlying greatness of soul, but we accept her claim that it is assumed in the background, perhaps as a pleasure closely tied to θυμός - this assumption is natural given the archaic origins of Greek virtue.

himself. The reader of Plato will recognize this motif instantly from the *Symposium's* account of ἔρως as the desire to possess τὸ καλόν for himself forever.²⁹¹ This kind of noble striving, emulation and pride is according to Moss the pre-rational driving force of habitual education.

Moss finally suggests that even though Aristotle does not comment explicitly on the cognitive character of this wish to possess what is noble, it is in fact formed by φαντασία.²⁹² The argument is identical to and further substantiates her general posit of an 'irrational' wish. Since the function of the love of the noble parallels that of pre-rational moral excellence in that each is said to set the aims of action, we can suppose that the love of the noble is irrational and involves non-rational cognition. The most prominent non-rational forms of cognition are perception and imagination, which is founded in perception. Based on what we know about these modes of cognition, we can form an explanation of how they could provide the noble youth with a generalized appearance of what is noble. For imagination especially works to synthesize actually present perceptions into memories, experiences, and anticipations of the future, and in the case of evaluative perceptions the resulting images (φαντάσματα) are pleasurable, painful and motivating in ways that parallel the perceptions from which they are formed. We can thus fairly easily understand how the repeated affective and motivating perception of noble and base actions *as* noble and base, the repeated feelings of correct pride, envy and emulation, could lead to generalized memories and anticipations of what is noble and base with parallel general motivations. This general love of the noble would be a kind of eager anticipation of possessing happiness as excellence, led by an inchoate and perhaps confused general image of what a happy life looks like, constructed from all past experience of the actions in which one has taken pride and which one has desired to emulate. Even though

²⁹¹ 204d-206a.

²⁹² 2012, pp. 219-223.

Aristotle does not describe this process in detail, it is at least coherent and even illuminating to assume with Moss that it underlies his account of habituation.²⁹³

We want to accept the basic thrust of Moss' work, particularly on how the love of the noble is conditioned by φαντασίαι of the happy life as a goal, and to expand on it for our own purposes. One key aspect of the phrase 'desire for the noble' is 'the noble': what is this? Moss tends to describe it as 'what is intrinsically worthwhile', or 'happiness', without further qualification. Now we, following Achtenberg, have already significantly qualified this idea - we have argued that 'what is intrinsically worthwhile' or 'what is happy' is in Aristotle a term used in several ways which are unified on an analogical and hierarchical scale. 'What is noble' must be referred to this standard, so that something is noble *to the degree* that it manifests a single characteristic of happiness or nobility. We have described some of the many instantiations of this value in specific activities and actions, such as political and philosophical happiness and the actions manifesting specific excellences. We can now note that Deborah Achtenberg has already characterized habituation helpfully as a kind of initial attunement of the soul to these various instantiations of happiness.²⁹⁴ Aside from failing to emphasize the hierarchy of goods, however, Achtenberg also did not place much emphasis on the unified characteristic of these objects of habitual desire. What is this one general term - the happy or the noble - which the various forms of happiness, excellences and noble actions manifest to varying degrees, and which habitually noble motivations attune us to? We hazarded some ideas in the Chapter II, on the basis of Aristotle's general remarks on happiness and divine activity -

²⁹³ For Moss' purposes, as we noted at the end of Section 1, this also amounts to an attribution of 'practical empiricism' to Aristotle: for it is possible to then assume that rational thought articulates more precisely and explicitly the content implicit and inchoate in these 'images', at every step of deliberation and in particular in the rational expression of 'wishes'.

²⁹⁴ 2002, pp. 133-142. Achtenberg, however, does not specify that this attunement is pre-rational, and actually seems to deny this, insofar as she assigns it to a practical function of νοῦς.

the degree of happiness corresponds to the degree of complete, self-subsisting activity. But we are interested in how this basic characteristic is cognized habitually, in the pre-rational love of what is noble. How is ‘what is noble’ or ‘what is happy’, as such a unified basic characteristic of the hierarchical and analogical scale of value, ‘seen’ by noble habits?²⁹⁵

This brings us to the second extension of Moss’ work we hope to effect. Moss defines noble pleasure as *pride* in possessing what is noble, and noble motivation as the desire to possess what is noble, which she at least implicitly acknowledges sometimes takes the specific form of emulation. This reflects an important fact. Although all motivations and affections share some important general characteristics - being determined by the cognition of an object as good, being a movement towards or away from something, etc. - each motivation and affection also seems to be specifically different from each other based on the sort of object or activity it is determined by.²⁹⁶ Noble pride, audacity, emulation, indignation, etc. are specifically different motivations and affections from their ‘base’ equivalents. Moss only gestures toward this specific difference, however, much as she only gestures towards that one character - nobility or happiness - which unifies the expressions of happiness and excellence. We have an interest in understanding more precisely the inherent quality of noble motivations and hatreds. What is the ‘love’ of the noble? What mode of rejoicing and hating is proper to *noble* motivations? What tendency runs through and unifies the motivational and affective life of the noble soul?

²⁹⁵ Some direct evidence that Moss would have done well to consider this question is found in the fact that the passage she relies on so heavily in defining noble pleasure - the *EN* IX.9 description of the happy man’s prideful perception of himself in his happy friend - is clearly correlative to the ideas of divine contemplative activity as ‘thought thinking itself’. A similar connection is found between the claim that life and pleasure is essentially *perceptual* and the claim that the divine principle, which *only* thinks, is most truly alive. Moss fails to note these connections.

²⁹⁶ This is reflected obviously in the definition of the passions in the rhetoric, which we examined above. But also by the fact that Aristotle’s understanding of pleasure seems to entail that different activities amount to *different pleasures*, not the same ‘pleasure’ in different activities (*EN* X.5).

These two demands for further qualifications of ‘love’ and ‘noble’ are obviously correlative. In a full interpretation, we would be able to show, on the ‘objective side’ of the correlation, what general characteristic of ‘nobility’ runs through all excellences and expressions of happiness and, on the subjective side, what specifically noble modes of motivation and affection characterize the life of the *καλοκαγαθός*, the *μεγαλόψυχος*. Our own more limited study aims to generate a plausible hypothesis and is in addition geared towards the question of how habituation as a process prepares for instruction in full excellence. Our goal is relatively modest: we want to offer a way to characterize that ‘moment’ in the noble youth’s education at which he becomes irrationally disposed to love ‘what is noble’. We want to describe as insightfully as we can the habituation process by which his motivations and tendencies of feeling are transformed, and the basic direction and orientation they gain, before offering a corresponding hypothesis as to how this basic pre-rational orientation and direction guides rational education in excellence (Section 3). This may suggest some directions for a fuller interpretation of noble motivation on the largest scale but falls somewhat short of that interpretation.

The basic method of our generative account of noble motivations is to understand how these are cultivated from their opposites - the base motivations which Aristotle seems to think characterize the affective life of the child before habitual education. Aristotle sometimes generically characterizes children as ‘living by feeling’, but also makes comments that let us understand this in much more precise terms.²⁹⁷ In an important passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 he characterizes *men* who live by feeling as follows:

They do not naturally tend (*πεφύκασιν*) to obey [the sense of] shame (*αἰδοῖ*), but rather fear, and do not abstain from base actions (*τῶν φαύλων*) on account of what is shameful but rather on account of [the fear of] retribution; for living by feeling (*πάθει ζῶντες*) they pursue their

²⁹⁷ EN I.3.1095a5; IV.9.1128b15; VIII.3.1156a30; X.9.1179b10. We use some of these passages in the body.

own private pleasures (οἰκείας ἡδονὰς) and the means to them, and avoid the opposing pains (τὰς ἀντικειμένους λύπας).²⁹⁸

The passage does not say that before being educated children are motivated only by private pleasure and pain, for its context shows that Aristotle is describing men and youths who, through persistent lack of education, act only on these motivations. But in respect of their lack of education these people resemble children, as is illustrated by Aristotle's claim that both the person who is youthful in years and who is youthful in character 'live by feeling'.²⁹⁹ The description is therefore useful for our purposes. What, then, are these 'private' pleasures and pains, the crucial starting material for habitual education?

The Greek 'private' (οἰκεῖος) is connected to the word for household (οἶκος). In a passage from the *Politics* on the earliest education of children, Aristotle states that living and spending all their time at home will naturally lead children to take pleasure illiberally (ἀπολαύειν ἀνελευθερίαν), because of the illiberal things they take pleasure in seeing and hearing at home.³⁰⁰ What are illiberal pleasures, and what is it to be motivated by them? ἀνελευθερία and its opposite ἐλευθερία literally refer to freedom and lack of freedom. In a specific signification they indicate meanness and liberality in money matters.³⁰¹ Aristotle makes use of their connotation of a more general 'meanness' as opposed to 'nobility', however, and for him ἐλευθερία comes to designate the life of excellence and ἀνελευθερία its opposite.³⁰² The person who is ἐλεύθερος is a person who loves what is noble and hates what is base. It is to this sort of person that the person who is 'private' in his love and hatred is opposed.

²⁹⁸ EN X.9.1179b10.

²⁹⁹ EN I.3.1095a1-5.

³⁰⁰ EN VII.171336b1.

³⁰¹ EN IV.1.

³⁰² Terence Irwin makes this point clearly and thoroughly in his comment on these words and their cognates, (1999, pg. 331).

The ἐλεύθερος person reappears with just this meaning immediately before the *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 passage we have quoted. Aristotle opposes him to the person who lives by private pleasure and pain, and calls him a “true lover of the noble” (ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλον).³⁰³ The passage characterizes the person who lives by private pleasure and pain as one who *would* do base actions (τὰ φαῦλα) if only he would not be punished for them by some pain opposed to his private pleasure (ie a ‘private’ pain). This is a person who wants to do base actions, because he is motivated by pleasures and pains in a way and of a sort that lead to base actions. The person of private pleasures and pains is thus defined in opposition to the person who loves and hates in a noble way: he loves and hates ‘basely’ and in a way characteristic of vice.

Because these ‘private’ motivations are essentially associated with vice, and their opposites with excellence, we are permitted to interpret them on the basis of some of Aristotle’s comments on the type of attention to pleasure and pain which characterizes vicious and excellent persons. An important passage expressing a traditional and influential Greek sentiment reads:

We must take as a sign of dispositions the pleasure and pain that accompanies actions; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and rejoices (χαίρων) in this is temperate, while the man who is grieved (ἀχθόμενος) is self-indulgent. And he who endures terrible things (ὑπομένων τὰ δεινὰ) and rejoices [in this] or is at least not grieved (μὴ λυπούμενος) is brave, while he who grieves is a coward. For excellence of character concerns pleasures and pains: it is on account of pleasure that we do base acts (τὰ φαῦλα), and on account of pain that we abstain from noble acts (τῶν κάλων).³⁰⁴

In interpreting this passage, we should first note that in the first clause, pleasure and pain refer to the feelings which indicate a person’s character, their chief desires and aversions. In the last sentence, by contrast, Aristotle identifies a sub-class of pleasures and pains which

³⁰³ *EN* X.9.1179b5.

³⁰⁴ *EN* II.3.1104b5-10.

lead to base actions. In so doing, he is primarily referring to a tendency to be motivated by this type of pleasure and pain – to love and hate *these* pleasures and pains and measure our actions - whether and how to act - by them. When he speaks of the vicious person as grieving at the types of actions done by excellent people, we are to understand that he does so because he loves and hates in a base way, i.e. because he is motivated and measures his actions by private pleasures and pains.

What then are the private pleasures and pains the love and hatred of which leads to base actions? The word base (φᾰῦλος) gives us a clue for interpreting this passage. The word connotes ‘bad’, ‘low’ and ‘ordinary’, as well as ‘cheap’, ‘easy’, and ‘thoughtless’.³⁰⁵ When we use this hint to interpret Aristotle’s claim that measuring our actions by private pleasures and pains leads to base acts, we get a good sense of what is meant by a ‘base’ love and hatred of ‘private’ pleasures and pains. For Aristotle gives paradigmatic examples of this type of motivation, in the case of self-indulgent and cowardly people, and these connotations of φᾰῦλος help us understand them.

We begin from the case of courage and cowardice. Courageous acts for Aristotle are mainly great acts in great circumstances (acts of war).³⁰⁶ They are performed by citizens in the face of the danger of death (the most terrible thing).³⁰⁷ The brave person performs the acts of war that are needed without fear and even with joy, for he recognizes that it is noble to do so and base to not.³⁰⁸ He values what is noble over what is comfortable, and fears disgrace more

³⁰⁵ LSJ Perseus.

³⁰⁶ *EN* III.6.1115a25-30.

³⁰⁷ *EN* III.8.1116a15-1116b1, 6.1115a25-1115b5.

³⁰⁸ This is not to say that he fears nothing in war (III.7 makes it very clear that he will fear some things), just that he will not fear the acts that are genuinely required (as his prudence tells him, presumably). This is also not to say that he will not be *pained*: III.9 acknowledges that brave acts are the most painful of excellent acts, and that the excellent person will in a sense be *more* pained than anyone in war, for he has the most pleasure in life. The same passage (especially 1117b10-15) makes it very clear, however, that the brave man will not be fearful or in any way *reluctant* in these cases: he consciously and unreservedly prefers this form of nobility over pleasure and a

than pain. The cowardly person is recognized by being frightened in just these situations of noble terror, and his fear reveals that, in opposition to the brave man, he hates the threat of pain and destruction to his body more than he hates the thought of disgrace, and loves the comfort and integrity of his body more than he loves honor and the noble.³⁰⁹ The dominance of the fear of bodily pain in his motivations leads him to abstain from noble acts.

When we compare the coward's motivations with the brave man's, we can understand how Aristotle could see it as fitting to describe the coward's desires and hatreds as 'low', 'mean' or 'cheap' (φᾶλος). For it might seem a cheap and ungenerous (ἀνελευθερός) thing to choose your own safety over the good of the city and the esteem of your family's name. Such a 'private' thing as one's own safety and comfort seems hardly worth one's attention in such situations. Similarly, we can understand that Aristotle would describe such motivations as 'easy', 'thoughtless' or 'without effort' (φᾶλος). For, as he tells us, it is very difficult and painful to face the loss of life and choose this for the sake of the noble.³¹⁰ It is quite easy, in the moment, to simply follow the motives of comfort and preservation, and avoid great danger at all costs. This remains true even if it is short-sighted - both in the moment as to the range of values in play in a situation, and as regards the future and the threat of punishment and disgrace it may hold for the coward.

The coward, then, is motivated by fear of injury to his 'private' interests of bodily comfort and integrity in the moment, and we can see that this motivation leads to 'cheap' and 'easy' (base) action.³¹¹ A parallel situation holds in the case of the self-indulgent man. His

long life full of other excellences.

³⁰⁹ This can be inferred especially from III.9 (on the relationship of courage to pain) as a commentary on our II.3 passage.

³¹⁰ *EN* III.9.1117a30.

³¹¹ It is important to note that we can go along with the general idea of the 'noble' and 'base' in motivations while also diverging from several of Aristotle's emphases in our account of courage. We might claim, for example, that *dissenting* from the esteem of society, in questions of war and otherwise, is more difficult, more against our short-

opposite, the temperate person, is characterized by desiring the pleasures of touch and taste only as is appropriate and does not interfere with his health or his acting well generally.³¹² He is as a result not pained by abstaining from them when these conditions are not met.³¹³ The self-indulgent man, on the other hand, desires these pleasures at the expense of health, propriety, or in general his ability to act excellently. He will as a result feel pain at not having a pleasure that is in any case inappropriate, harmful to his health, or that prevents him from acting well; and this pain is a barrier to these actions as well.

Our overview of the meaning of φαῦλος helps us make sense of Aristotle's evaluations of self-indulgence, just as it did with cowardice. When we contrast the action and the feeling of the self-indulgent man with the temperate, the former appears 'mean' or 'cheap'. Aristotle implies this when he says that this person loves the pleasures of touch and taste more than they are worth (μᾶλλον τῆς ἀξίας).³¹⁴ To give up health for the sake of nice flavors seems to be a poor trade and an indication of having a skewed sense of value; even more so to fill one's belly beyond the capacity to think and act.³¹⁵ And to think of sex or delicate tastes and be disturbed by their absence, at a time when excellence demands another action, seems to be the sign of a soul with low and shortsighted sensibilities. Likewise, such motives are thought by Aristotle to be 'easier' than temperate ones.³¹⁶ For we have from childhood pursued the sense of pleasure,³¹⁷ and we are as a result more naturally drawn (πεφύκαμεν) to it than to resisting it, and thus to indulgence than to temperance.³¹⁸ Continence – the disposition to *resist* bad

term interest, and thus more of a sacrificial choice of the good than the actions Aristotle has focused on.

³¹² EN III.1119a10-20.

³¹³ EN III.11.1118b25-1119a5.

³¹⁴ EN III.11.1119a15-20.

³¹⁵ EN III.11.1118b15-20.

³¹⁶ EN III.12.1119a20-30.

³¹⁷ EN III.12.1119b1-5; II.3.1105a1; X.9.1179b30. In this connection note the comment (DA III.12-13) that touch is the first and most common sense of animal life, and that self-indulgence is the most animal of vices (EN III.10).

³¹⁸ EN II.8.1109a15; III.12.1119a20-30. Temperance itself is of course not a disposition to resist appetite, but it

appetites – is characterized by more effort of thought than self-indulgence and incontinence.³¹⁹ The very name for self-indulgence (ἀκολασία) includes a reference to being unbridled and unrestrained, and restraints are hard to the unrestrained.³²⁰ It is much easier, Aristotle would have us think, to pursue each pleasure of touch and taste indiscriminately, living according to appetite (κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν) as children do.³²¹

This last phrase obviously resembles the 'living according to feeling' which we have already encountered in the men and children of 'private' pleasures and pains. The resemblance is just. For we see Aristotle describing the youthful life of feeling and the friendship founded in it as concerned with τὸ πάρον, with what is immediately available.³²² And the pleasures of touch and taste are in fact so private that Aristotle practically equates these senses with the organism's individual bodily life.³²³ Just as in the case of cowardice, then, we find that self-indulgence is motivated by such 'private' pleasures and pains. We can tentatively and generally characterize these as pleasures and pains involving the sense of touch: comforts, pleasures, pains and destructions of 'the body'. According to Aristotle, the motivational life of the child and the uneducated man center around these base - private, easy, trivial, and thoughtless pleasures and pains. These motivations come naturally and easily to human beings and are in conflict with excellent actions, which demand motivations that are noble, i.e. free, expansive,

originates from this disposition - for as the child is being habituated, he does not have the motivations of the virtuous person, as these passages and *EN* II.4 make very clear.

³¹⁹ This can be inferred from the final analysis of incontinence (*EN* VII.3): continence involves the effort of remembering and activating the elements of the practical syllogism which bad appetites lead us to forget. This is evidently connected with the etymological point Aristotle makes about σοφροσύνη and φρόνησις (*EN* VI.1140b10-15): bad appetites destroy the ability to think well about pleasures, and that temperance accordingly preserves prudence.

³²⁰ LSJ Perseus. Parallel points can be made about continence (ἐνκρατεία) and incontinence (ἀκρασία). The etymological derivation makes its way into Aristotle's commentary on the resemblance of self-indulgent men to children in respect of being unrestrained (*EN*.III.12.1119ba-15).

³²¹ *EN* III.12.1119b5.

³²² *EN* VIII.3.1156a30.

³²³ *DA* III.13.

and difficult. The goal of an education in good habits must be to produce a youth with these kinds of motivations.³²⁴

How does this occur? And what does this process say about the noble motivations it produces? Aristotle recommends that private motivations be *overcome* by an esteem- and shame- based habituation process which encourages the youth to ground his sense of self-worth in his ability to overcome them. This gives the youth a general heroic impulse to distinguish himself by this difficult transcending of private motivations. This impulse is the initial, pre-rational love of the noble we are seeking.

We have already seen how the excellent man's motivations can be characterized as more difficult than the 'easy' motivations of the base man, and that the motivations of the base man appear 'trivial' and small compared to those of the excellent man. The motivations of justice, courage, temperance, and liberality are more difficult than those of their opposite vices and are more expansive than private pleasures and pains. In exactly this respect, the motivations of the excellent man constitute an 'overcoming' and 'transcending' of the motivations of the base man, and the pleasures and pains the base man loves and hates. This 'overcoming' has a temporal aspect as well, for as children our motivational lives are dominated by these base and private pleasures and pains. The task of education is therefore to 'rub off' or 'wear out' (ἀποτριψασθαι) our initial tendencies of motivation.³²⁵ Education can

³²⁴ Although Aristotle's chief examples of excellent actions and motivations in *Nicomachean Ethics* II surround the excellences of courage and temperance, which bear a special relation to the categories of pain and pleasure, respectively (as indicated by *EN* III.12, 9), we infer from his opposition of 'private' motivations to 'noble' ones *in general* (*EN* X.9.1179b5-30) that courage and temperance are intended as representatives of the general category of 'excellence' (as is often the case in *EN* II). It can also be argued, in the case of many of the individual excellences, that the motives that characterize them are opposed to more natural and 'private' motives. Thus meanness is more common than liberality and prodigality and involves arrogating wealth to oneself, a bias towards 'one's own' interest is more common than justice, and a tendency to take excessive offence to personal injury is more common than good temper.

³²⁵ *EN* III.3.1105a1.

for this reason be considered a ‘fight’ (μαχή) with pleasure, which ‘dismisses’ (ἀποπέμπεσθαι) motivations for private pleasure.³²⁶ Education is at times even identified with the forceful process of chastising a pleasure-driven child.³²⁷ Such considerations may also help explain Aristotle’s frequent equation of what is good with what is difficult (τὸ χαλεπόν). Although this difficulty is typically associated with the difficulty of ‘hitting the mean’,³²⁸ one reason that hitting the mean is difficult is that we love (private) pleasure so much.³²⁹ Similarly, we can readily understand why Aristotle twice characterizes excellence of character as something that ‘prevails’ (περιγίγνεσθαι) after habituation once we understand habituation as essentially a battle with private motivations, and the noble motivations which are the earliest stage in acquiring excellence as essentially in tension with or resistant to these pleasures.³³⁰

Initial, pre-rational excellence of character, then, is a disposition of motivation in which a man loves the noble and hates the base, a disposition that ‘prevails’ after the work of habituation to ‘rub out’, overcome, or transcend the force of ‘private’ motivations. How does habituation effect this transition? By what influence is the irrational soul brought to love and hate ‘nobly’? The *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 passage we quoted in the last section offers the beginning of an answer; it opposes to the tendency to obey only ‘private’ motivations the tendency to obey the sense of shame (αἰδοῖ πειθαρχεῖν).³³¹ This is confirmed by the

³²⁶ *EN* II.3.1105a5. 9.1109b10.

³²⁷ *EN* II.3.1104b15, X.9.1180a5; III.12.1119b1-5. To the objection that the latter passage occurs at the end of Aristotle’s remarks on temperance, and therefore concerns only temperance, we can respond with the argument already made, that the motivations of self-indulgence are typical of the more general ‘base’ motivations by what is ‘private’.

³²⁸ *EN* II.6.1106b25-30 and 9.1109a20-25,

³²⁹ *EN* II.8.1109a15. The same is recognized explicitly in II.9.1109a20-25, for just below, at 1109b5-10, Aristotle recommends that the difficult mean is to be ‘hit’ most easily by avoiding pleasure. *EN* II.3.1105a1-10 also connects the claim that what is excellent is difficult with our natural tendency to (private) pleasure.

³³⁰ *EN* II.1.1103a15, 4.1105b1. This element of Aristotle’s theory of education may complicate Deborah Achtenberg’s general thesis that for Aristotle emotions are to be ‘developed’ and not suppressed or redirected (2002, pp.30-44). At least at first, noble motivations imply a kind of noble rejoicing in the overcoming of other motivations.

³³¹ *EN* X.9.1179b10.

Nicomachean Ethics chapter Aristotle devotes to shame; it is the sign of a good young man (νεανίας), who makes mistakes because he is motivated by private pleasure and pain, to feel shame at these mistakes rather than exclusively identifying with their motivations.³³² But this good young man is equivalent to the well-bred lover of the noble of which *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 spoke, the one who has been well habituated in his motivations.³³³ The goal of habituation seems to be to produce a youth motivated by a sense of shame, and the sense of shame is somehow connected to the love of the noble.

What, more precisely, is this youthful sense of shame, and on what motivations does it draw? Aristotle's comments on shame confirm what might be our expectation, namely that the sense of shame is a feeling contingent on the love of esteem, the love of the good opinion of others. For he says that the good young man is ashamed not only at actions that are truly shameful, but also those that are shameful only according to social esteem (κατὰ δόξαν).³³⁴ And the reason he gives is that the well-habituated youth, as well as the good man, avoids the feeling of shame altogether. This comment suggests that the primary object of the sense of shame is not simply actions, feelings and desires that are *bad*, independent of what others think, but rather those 'considered' bad by the opinion of society. The well-educated youth, bred by good habituation, wants to win the good opinion of others and to avoid disrepute in their eyes.

Why should this sense of shame help motivate a young man to love and hate nobly, and how does this come about? The answer, in brief, is that the sense of shame is initially a function of the desire for the father's esteem, and that the father, if he is a prudent man, makes his esteem

³³² *EN* IV.9.1128b15-20.

³³³ *EN* X.9.1179b5.

³³⁴ *EN* IV.9.1128b20-25. *Eudemian Ethics* III.7.1233b25, and the detailed analysis of shame at *Rhetoric* II.6, also make it clear that we feel shame at actions and passions that show inferiority, when these are done in any way with the knowledge of those we admire, compete with, or respect.

conditional upon noble actions and motivations. Eventually, as the youth leaves the household, this desire for esteem extends to other prudent men and the whole citizen body of superiors and – eventually - peers. This answer can be formed on the basis of the following important passage:

Just as in cities laws and character (τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τὰ ἥθη) have force (ἐνισχύει), so also in households do the words and habits (οἱ λόγοι καὶ τὰ ἔθη) of the father [have force], and these [latter] even more so on account of the tie of kinship and the benefits he confers (τὴν συγγένειαν καὶ τὰς εὐεργεσίας); for the children already by nature (προυπάσχουσι τῇ φύσει) love and tend to obey (στέργοντες καὶ εὐπειθεῖς).³³⁵

The passage clearly identifies two social ‘locations’ of education: the city and the household. In both cases, the men in authority must possess prudence, for the ability to legislate and to set a good example by one’s own behavior involve this.³³⁶ In the city, the laws agreed upon by prudent men and their display of good character by their excellent actions rule and exact obedience. In the household, which is the first stage of education, the command of the father and his display of his own habits has the same force. In fact, the force is even greater, because of the child’s natural love for and obedience to the father. What is this natural love, why does it exact obedience, and how is this loving obedience connected to the sense of shame which characterizes the noble, well-educated youth?

To understand this comment, we must remember that Aristotle recognizes a class of friendship (φιλία) that persists between superiors and inferiors, rulers and subjects, and here he includes the friendship that grows naturally between child and parent.³³⁷ The love (φιλεῖν) of the ruled party (slave, child and wife) in all such friendships is manifest in obedience to the ruling party (master, father, husband).³³⁸ In the case of the child this obedience is a kind of

³³⁵ *EN* X.9.1180b1-5.

³³⁶ *EN* VI.8.

³³⁷ See, for example, *EN* VIII. 7.1158b10-25, 1.1155a15,

³³⁸ *Pol.* I.12-13.

respect (αἰδώς), and the etymological connection of respect to shame (αἶδος) suggests to us that the child obeys out of some love of parental esteem or honor.³³⁹ In an instructive passage from his book on friendship, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of lovers of honor:

Most people delight in being honored (χαίρουσι τιμώμενοι) by those in positions of authority because of their hopes (for they think that if they want anything they will get it from them) and therefore they delight in honor as a sign of favor (σμεῖω τῆς εὐπαθείας); while those who desire honor from good men, and men who know, are aiming to secure (βεβαιῶσαι) their own opinion of themselves; they delight in honor, therefore, because they believe themselves to be good on the strength of the judgement of those who speak about them.³⁴⁰

The passage we quoted on the obedience of the child might give the impression that the child respects and obeys the father and seeks his esteem in the childish equivalent of the first of these two ways of loving honor. For the child's love was seen there to be connected to the benefits conferred by the father (τὰς εὐεργεσίας), and this seems connected to the good favor (εὐπάθεια) the mature lover of honor for gain seeks. The child would thus honor the father and his opinion in order to defend itself against his punishments and secure rewards. This seems partly true, given that the child is motivated largely by private pains and pleasures, and Aristotle admits a place for external punishment and reward in education.³⁴¹ But Aristotle is also explicit about the limitations of an education that produces a youth motivated only by the hope of reward and the fear of punishment, and contrasts this explicitly with the noble youth's sense of shame.³⁴² Obedience to the command of the father and esteem for his opinion is in this case contingent upon private consequences, and therefore so is the desire of the noble actions that are commanded. This disqualifies such motivations from counting as excellent in

³³⁹ *Pol.* VII.16.1335a1

³⁴⁰ *EN* VIII.8.1159a15-20.

³⁴¹ The existence of this type of education is attested to by Aristotle's comments on the corrective use of pleasures and pains (*EN* II.3.1104b15, X.9.1179b10, 1180a5), as well as the identification of education with chastisement (*EN* IV.1119b1-5).

³⁴² *EN* X.9.1179b10.

the proper sense.³⁴³

We should therefore suppose that a nascent and childish version of the love of the esteem of good men is implied by the child's loving obedience to its father, and that this obedient love of fatherly esteem is what leads to the love of excellent actions. Just as the youth with a sense of shame values the opinion of his superiors as an indication of his own worth, and the man who loves honor values the opinion of his peers and superiors for the same reason, so the child will crave parental approval as a sign of being loved. The father's esteem is in this case more properly the object of the child's love than in the case of the love of esteem contingent upon private reward, for the father's positive opinion is what is loved, as a sign of being loved. It is also fairly clear how this love of esteem will effectively inculcate properly and intrinsically noble motivations. For if he is raised in a good household, by a prudent man, the child will win his father's outspoken approval and love only by doing the types of actions that prudent men do, and thus by overcoming his own private motivations. When he does what is base or shows base desires and feelings, and his father expresses his disapproval, the child will feel unloved, and will feel shameful and inferior for not having overcome those motivations. Eventually, the boy comes to identify his own worth so much with his father's opinion that he wants of himself what his father wants of him. His motivations thus extend precisely to what is noble, because he feels his own worth is contingent on it. As the boy leaves the household, this love of esteem and hatred of shame extends to other men of his father's social position and character – the good and the wise – who command, praise, and discourage him and his peers in the same ways. In the end, the youth's sense of self-worth is bound up with the esteem of his society of superiors, and eventually of peers, so that he desires what they

³⁴³ As the conditions of *EN* II.4.1104b30-1105a1 show.

desire of him, and hates what would win their hatred. When faced with a situation requiring excellence – say a situation of mortal danger where the city depends on him – he will want to do the action that wins him the approval of the city and of himself – he will be motivated to do what is painful but honorable.³⁴⁴

This generative account of noble motivations as the overcoming of base, private motivations gives us a sociologically and psychologically richer, and at the same time more *dynamic* understanding of that ‘pride’ in perceiving oneself as possessing intrinsic goods which Jessica Moss claimed characterizes noble motivations. The noble youth raised by strict education in an excellent society unreservedly stakes his own worth on his ability to do and feel what is expansive and difficult, and in never doing or feeling what would indicate smallness, triviality or narrowness in his view and motives. There will be a strong social element in this ‘pride’ - he effectively wants to win glory from his excellent peers and will not consider himself happy without this. There is also what we might hazard to call a ‘warlike’ element in this pride: his motivations, especially at first, take the form of a determination to resist, fight and overcome that in himself which is ‘low’ or ‘mean’; an attitude of courage is essential to noble motivation. Correlative with this militaristic element is a *generosity*, for his goal always involves extending his concerns beyond his own private body to the city and eventually (in philosophy) the cosmos: what is noble is tied to what is expansive.³⁴⁵ If Moss is

³⁴⁴ The existence of the educational regimen of approval and disapproval can be discerned from the evident importance of praise and castigation, exhortation and discouragement, in educating the irrational soul (*EN* I.13.1102b30-1103a1), and the numerous evaluative words of praise and blame attached to excellent and vicious actions throughout the ethics. Its existence is still clearer at the public level; Aristotle mentions at least once that honor and dishonor are to be awarded publicly for the benefit of the education of children (e.g. *Pol.* VII.17.1336b5-10). These passages guide our assumption of a public reinforcement of good actions by praise and honor, and of bad actions by blame and shame.

³⁴⁵ The reader should note throughout the following pages that in speaking of ‘generosity’ we do not have in mind anything like ‘altruism’, in the sense of other-serving motivations and ‘selflessness’. Our use of the term generosity in describing motives is meant to capture the Greek sense of greatness of soul. The expansion of the self’s interests is not a denial of self-interest: it is a kind of self-aggrandizement. Noble motivation is to take pride in the expansiveness of one’s interests, a deeply counter-Christian concept.

right that these noble motives are guided by and prompt images of happiness, we can even think of the noble youth as a person who imagines himself getting all sorts of honors and distinguishing himself by difficult and admirable feats that require him to transcend his low current life. Accordingly, he will come to every situation and facet of life with this view and will see life as one great opportunity to overcome himself, expand his interests, win distinction (aggrandize himself in his essential concerns and his honor). These desires, this ‘pride’, will include the benefit of the city itself and (in the eventual development of a philosophical type of motivation), the enjoyment of the good of the *cosmos* itself.

There are significant historical parallels that encourage us to welcome this as an interpretation of the noble soul’s motivational landscape. An obvious one is its resonance with archaic heroism and its remnants in Greek political life.³⁴⁶ Archaic heroes were eminent in courage, skill in battle, strength, endurance, and in many cases that heroism of words known as rhetoric. They won the greatest glory and honor for themselves partly by providing the greatest benefits to the societies they ruled. They were ‘generous’ in assuming the greatest responsibilities and corresponding honors. In classical Athens, some of these values were transferred to the democratic political arena, where the new heroes competed rhetorically and prudentially to make their stamp on the city and aggrandize it. Being concerned with public life was a citizen’s requirement in this new noble self-understanding, and won one a new but essentially similar place of eminence.³⁴⁷ It has sometimes been remarked that Aristotle’s approach to ethics is well understood as a philosophical articulation of this cultural background.³⁴⁸ Thus, for example, Pierre Aubenque has brought it to our attention that

³⁴⁶ For my understanding of archaic values I rely primarily on Jaeger’s *Paideia*, chapters one and two (1946, pp. 3-34) and also on MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* (1981, pp. 121-130).

³⁴⁷ Jaeger, 1946, chapter 6, 8.

³⁴⁸ See for example Jaeger (1947, pp.11-14).

Aristotle often refers to the excellent man as ὁ σπουδαῖος, a word connoting militaristic excellences of vigor and valour.³⁴⁹ ὁ σπουδαῖος decides upon and achieves what is of benefit to himself and the city by his own moral and intellectual strength and not any system of values fixed in advance. Our characterization of the noble motivations in this section has sought to trace his ability to do so to an initial ‘noble’ set of motivations - a generalized heroic and prideful courage and generosity of motive.

The philosophical parallels that resonate with this concept of noble motivations are yet stronger and more directly relevant. I will mention only two. First of all, we find in Plato a parallel concept of how the guardians and philosophers must have strong θύμος - a tendency to fight for their friends, to defend and die for their city and to be roused by whatever they think is great.³⁵⁰ Connected to this is Plato’s own closest equivalent of a discussion of greatness of soul.³⁵¹ The philosopher must possess this quality, and Plato defines it as a tendency to be so expansive in one’s motivations as to be concerned with grasping everything divine and human, all time and being, and therefore incoherent with small-souled evaluations, such as considering money, human life and death, or sensual pleasures important. Even at the level of the generic guardian, though, some version of this quality is found, for the guardians are after all those who forget the distinction between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ and live wholly for the good of something larger than their individual self.³⁵² We thus find in Plato a theory of the need for generous and courageous motives of roughly the sort we have attributed to Aristotle.

Even more exaggerated parallels to these courageous and generous motivations is found epitomized in Cynic and Stoic philosophy. As an ascetic practitioner of virtue, the Cynic

³⁴⁹ 1963, pp. 41-51, esp. 44-48.

³⁵⁰ See for example *Republic* 412c-e, 439e-441b.

³⁵¹ *Republic* 486a-b.

³⁵² *Republic* 416d-423e, 461e-464e.

is required to practice extreme endurance amounting to a courageous indifference to pain and abject physical conditions.³⁵³ Similarly, the Stoic philosopher applies merciless courage in overcoming his tendency to value *anything* external to his own power of judgement and will. In each case, virtue itself tends almost to be identified with a generalized, philosophically sublimated form of strength and courage. The inverse side of this ‘asceticism’ is an expansion of the self in motivations of extreme generosity. Thus both philosophies tend towards cosmopolitanism in different ways but in each case with an extreme opening of the horizon of concern to the good of humanity as such and - in the Stoic case - of the cosmos.³⁵⁴

We are not suggesting that the archaic, Periclean, Platonic, Aristotelian, Cynic and Stoic codes of virtue are identical. They do seem to display strongly parallel concepts of noble motivations as characterized by forms of courage and generosity that secure a place of eminence for their possessor, however. As we have also tried to note, neither have we shown that this general idea of ‘nobility’ is some kind of complete principle of value for Aristotle. We have tried to suggest, however, that it is the ethical subject’s first encounter with a basic and universal element of whatever might afterwards be called happy and excellent. Our thought is that every expression of excellence and happiness will also be ‘noble’ in this sense, will demand generous motives that extend beyond narrow self-interest, courageous motives that are fit to endure opposition to narrow self-interest, and a tendency to value oneself on one’s ability to act in ways that express such motives. We might even hazard to say that the degree of excellence and happiness can be charted by the degree of ‘nobility’ in this sense. The love

³⁵³ See for example Diogenes Laertius’ description of the original Cynic’s exercises in virtue, *DL* VI.2.70-71, and Diogenes’ apocryphal letter #12 (in Malherbe, pg. 107). A significant part of Cynic exercise was a regimen designed to desensitize the philosopher to physical pleasure and pain, an extreme form of ‘courage’ in overcoming base motivations, leading to an exclusive focus on virtuous deeds. See also Goulet-Cazé’s *L’ascèse cynique*, 1986, for an interpretation.

³⁵⁴ We cannot track these claims in detail. For the interested reader, Epictetus’ discourse on the ideal Cynic (3.22) provides a synthesis of the Cynic and Stoic approaches, with an obvious priority for the Stoic.

of the noble would be an initial, general and emphatic introduction into the idea of excellence which, as we indicate in the next section, prepares the noble youth to grasp and be motivated by its various expressions.

Section 3: The Preparatory Function of the Love of the Noble: A Hypothesis

In this thesis our overall goal is to understand the contribution made to excellence by proper habituation. In Chapter I we already recognized on the basis of passages from the *Politics* that this contribution is a preparatory one: good habituation is supposed to prepare for a second phase of education, rational instruction, and for the excellence that results from this combined educational regimen. In two crucial passages from *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 we get more evidence to this effect:³⁵⁵

As things are, they [arguments (λόγοι)] seem to have power (ισχύειν) to encourage and stimulate (προτρέψασθαι καὶ παρορμήσαι) those among the young who are free and generous (ἐλευθερίους), and to make a character which is well-bred and a true lover of the noble ready to be possessed by excellence (κατοκώχιμον ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς). But they are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness (καλοκαγαθίαν). For these [the many] do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from base actions on account of what is shameful, but on account of [the fear of] retribution; living by feeling they pursue their own private pleasures and what contributes to them, and avoid the opposing pains, and have not even an insight (ἐννοίαν) into what is noble and truly pleasant, being without taste [for it] (ἄγευστοι ὄντες). What argument would remold (μεταρρυθμίσει) such people? It is impossible or [at least] not easy to remove by argument (μεταστήσει λόγῳ) what has been seized by the character (τὰ τοῖς ἡθεσι κατειλημμένα) for a long time; perhaps [in such cases] we must be content if, when all the influences by which we are thought to become good are present, we get some share (μεταλάβοιμεν) of excellence.³⁵⁶

Argument and teaching are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must have been prepared beforehand (προδιεργάσθαι) by habits for noble rejoicing and hating (καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μισεῖν), like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives by feeling will not hear or understand argument that dissuades him (λόγου ἀποτρέποντος); and how can we persuade one in such a disposition to change? And in general feeling seems to yield (ὕπείκειν) not to argument but to violence (βίῃ). The character, then, must somehow be there already (προυπάρχειν) with a kinship to excellence (οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς), loving what is noble and hating what is base.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ The claim is made again in less detail at *EN* I.3.1095a5-10.

³⁵⁶ *EN* X.9.1179b5-15.

³⁵⁷ *EN* X.9.1179b20-30.

These passages are unambiguous in the assertion that arguments or instruction about excellence can take effect on a person only if his character is prepared in advance by good habits, equated here with the noble motivations we have described in the last section. The basic reason given is that the person with good habits is already ‘akin to’ excellence. He has an insight into what is noble and a taste for it which ensures he loves and hates nobly. Given this, he can be encouraged and stimulated further along (προτρέψασθαι) a path he is already on.³⁵⁸ The base character, on the other hand, has no insight into or taste for the noble. His motivations and affections are contrary to excellence. If he is to become excellent, he must have his character changed and turned away (ἀποτρέψασθαι) from its existing direction, something argument has no power to do. He therefore responds only to violence, or in other words to the threat of punishments and promise of rewards which appeal to his existing character and its motivational tendencies.

Taken in itself, this is an answer to our question. But it is not a very satisfying one since it only scratches the surface. In what way is the noble character already ‘on the path to’ or ‘akin to’ excellence, and what is the ‘pushing along’ that arguments about excellence achieve? This physical description is an analogy and is imprecise, much in the same way that we found the idea that habitual heteronomous obedience prepares for autonomous command limited in Chapter I. There we proposed that the harmony of command and obedience - full excellence - and its commanding aspect in particular - prudent choice - must be understood by psychologically precise analysis if the contribution of habituation is to become clear. The same

³⁵⁸ There is a potentially interesting study to be made here on the *protreptic* genre of philosophy in Plato and Aristotle. For in Plato we see similar phrases employed in apparently opposed ways: thus, famously, education is a ‘turning around’ of the eye of the soul ‘towards’ reality (στρέφειν πρὸς) (*Republic* 518c), apparently very different from the ‘encouraging forward’ we find in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9.

is true in this case. We will apply what we know about Aristotelian moral and cognitive psychology to the interpretation of these passages to produce an account of habitual preparation.

The passages identify the goal of instruction in excellence variously as excellence, ‘possession by excellence’, and *καλοκαγαθία*. Now *καλοκαγαθία* tends to indicate in Aristotle the possession of all the excellences.³⁵⁹ As we have seen, this unity of the excellences is also called ruling excellence (*ἀρετὴ κυρίως*) and depends on prudence. It is a harmony of prudent choice with desire and feeling obedient to that choice. Now prudent choice, the ruling part of full excellence, is in turn analyzed into two distinct and complementary excellences with different cognitive and motivational statuses and perfected by two distinct stages in education. On the one hand we have moral excellence, also identified as excellent wish or - as in the present passages - noble motivations. The function of this excellence is to ‘aim’ correctly at the end of life. Aristotle consistently describes this as an excellence of habits and assigns to habituation the task of perfecting motivations into this excellent wish. We have seen in passages like the one cited above that these habits parallel noble motivations in their functions: the loving insight into and taste for the noble is the non-rational mirror image of excellence wish.

On the other hand we have skill in deliberating. The function of this excellence is at the very least to discover what contributes to the habitually known end of life in specific situations - what course of action best instantiates happiness? Some have also argued it articulates the general structure of happiness on the basis of the guidance of noble wish. In any case, skill in deliberation is a rational faculty of thinking how to achieve ends and is produced by explicitly

³⁵⁹ Jaeger, 1947, pg. 420, n.35. *EE* VII.15

rational instruction or teaching. It must be guided by habitually excellent wish if it is to amount to prudence and ground correct choices. Likewise, instruction in this skill relies on habituation's previous cultivation of noble habits of motivation if it is to result in full excellence. These are two aspects of the same claim, one from the perspective of mature decision making and one from the perspective of the cultivation of those faculties necessary for excellent decision making.

These parallels permit us to interpret the preparatory contribution of habits to moral education in terms of the psychological status of the love of the noble in relation to deliberate choice and obedience to choice. If habituation produces the love of the noble and instruction produces the ability to deliberate about how to achieve what is noble, the relation between habituation and instruction in producing excellence should parallel the relationship between the love of the noble and good deliberation in producing good choices obediently executed. How then does the love of what is noble guide deliberation?

At one level a simple answer is already prepared for us by our work so far. We have suggested that 'what is noble' overlaps with 'the end' and therefore with happiness; the love of the noble is a wish for happiness. We have defined the end or happiness as the life in accordance with excellence and have claimed that this is a single general and complex principle admitting of several hierarchically and analogically related fulfillments. We have understood deliberation's work in choosing particular actions in particular situations as the work of seeking the best fulfillment of this principle available in a situation, and have argued that Aristotle thinks the principle itself dictates there will always be such a best fulfillment, though it depends greatly on the concrete details of the situation and cannot be discovered without reference to these. This process can be represented by a syllogism along the lines of 'happiness, the good,

is what is excellent', 'this action here is excellent', 'this action is the good at present'. The crucial point for our purposes is that the most important concept - happiness as 'excellence' - is found in the major premise. The minor premise which guides action merely applies the concepts of the major to particulars or discovers in particulars the concepts of the major. But excellent wish provides the major premise and deliberation provides the minor. Therefore excellent wish seems to provide deliberation with all its most important general content, leaving only the task of applying that content to specific situations, or recognizing it in them. Put otherwise, deliberation only seeks to achieve, as best as the particular situation allows, what excellent wish posits as good. But excellent wish for this end is guaranteed by noble habits. Noble habits then apparently provide all the basic guiding content of deliberation.

Some examples will be helpful. Take some statements representing the content of excellent wishes. 'Contemplation is the highest human activity', 'excellence is superior to physical pleasure', 'the purpose of the state is to cultivate excellence and happiness', 'one must always do what is needed', 'respect the law of proportional equality', 'honor the excellent', and so on. Compare them with some statements representing the conclusions of deliberation. 'I will go to the assembly to cast a vote', 'I will stand and face the enemy instead of retreating', 'I will accept my exile without protest'. Our major point, which we argued in Chapter II.4b, is that the latter group of statements are derived from the former. I will stand and fight despite the danger because excellence and the good of the city are superior to my personal safety. I will accept political exile quietly because contemplation is my highest good. It is only because I have the general beliefs that I can form the action-guiding beliefs on Aristotle's account of deliberation. In deliberation I recognize a particular action as a manifestation of some value I hold - I recognize, for example, that my vote in the assembly works to secure the happiness of

the city. If I do not first recognize the general purpose and value of the city and of political activity, I cannot decide rightly to cast a vote. Insofar as habituation provides me with excellent wishes it therefore gives me the basic standards and principles of deliberation, the general and guiding descriptions under which I choose and pursue things as good.

This remains true even though, as we saw in Chapter II.4, the specific decisions are by no means abstractly and universally deduced from the general principles. Habitually excellent wish gives us a motivating understanding of happiness in general, but this is in itself not sufficient to recommend any specific action. We can value contemplation over politics, but this does not translate into an actionable principle to never speak in the assembly. We can value proportional equality, but this does not require in advance that we distribute any particular sum to any particular man. In summary fashion we may desire to do ‘what is intermediate’, amounting to ‘what is needed for happiness’, but we will never encounter this ‘what is needed’ in the abstract. What is encountered is particular possible courses of action, and the general principles of happiness do not define what is good in any particular situation. They rather, as we have argued (Chapter II.3a), describe the analogical and hierarchical relationships which hold between general categories of action as well as particular actions. There is a gap between these general principles and the choice of the particular action as best in a particular context. We have shown (Chapter II.4b) that this gap is filled by deliberate imagination and calculation.

Still, we argued that the way in which deliberation fills this gap between general principles and categories of goodness and the particular actions it sees as good and best is by recognizing how and to what extent it is possible to instantiate those general principles and categories in the particular actions available to it in the particular context in which it finds itself. Virtually everything about the particular situation and the actions available in it is

provided by deliberation, but the general principles of value it finds manifested in the situation are not. Thus it is deliberation and its forms of perception and imagination which register the fact that the enemy is approaching, that they outnumber us, that there is little chance of escape, that we stand a chance of inflicting heavy losses and delaying their advance, that the battle will be lost if our flank is lost, and that the city might be enslaved in the case of defeat. If this succession of facts provokes alternating passions and eventually a decision to stand and fight, it is because this same deliberative process *also* recognizes some general premises, for example, ‘life is pleasant and a good’, ‘the life of the city is greater than the life of an individual’, ‘the excellence of an individual is greater than his bodily life and comfort’, ‘cowardice is shameful’, and others like them. Deliberation recognizes these general truths in the particular facts, both in its ‘deliberations’ (for example, ‘if the enemy passes the city might be enslaved and thus lose its happiness’) and in its conclusions (‘it would be cowardice and vice to retreat - I must stand despite the danger to myself’). Even though deliberation is needed to discover what the situation provides for the best instantiation of happiness, deliberation is still limited to just that, and does so on the basis of general truths about happiness, excellent action, and the hierarchies of happiness and excellence.

One significant trend of our work so far therefore suggests that noble habits - as excellent wishes - provide the soul with a general and motivating understanding of the nature of happiness as excellence. Deliberation must then provide concrete details about what counts as excellent and happy in specific cases. Because this initial idea of happiness is very complex, deliberation encounters particular circumstances and actions as manifesting it everywhere it turns. And because the wish for happiness is defined by hierarchical and analogical relationships between all its many terms, deliberation is able to reach a decision which

identifies what, given the limitations inherent to the situation, best achieves happiness. Deliberation never leaves the basic guiding orbit of excellent habitual wish - it merely uses and finds manifested the general terms provided by habitual wish in particular situations. Habits prepare for instruction in deliberation in a similar way. Instruction in deliberation must mean providing the soul with an experiential familiarity with many kinds of situations calling for decisions and in particular the 'values', the manifestations of goodness, in them. It will simultaneously be a way of imparting the skill one needs to make decisions - how to weigh competing values, how to isolate the important elements, how to recognize when a contrast in possibilities corresponds to a general hierarchy and thus calls for a decision, etc. All this will be possible only for the soul with a general wish for and correct belief in the nature of happiness and excellence. For instruction, like deliberation itself, thinks the same things as wish, using the same terms and discovering the same hierarchies and analogies - only it does so in the medium of particularity and what is concrete. Only excellent wish allows the soul to learn to recognize the objects of excellent wish in concrete circumstances and to desire in accordance with that knowledge.

The apparent elegance of this interpretation of the contribution of habit to instruction and deliberate choice masks certain problems. We noted already in Chapter II.5 that excellent wish and the deliberation process it is supposed to guide are inchoate and implicit grasps of metaphysically defined principles. They are also *rational*. We have been able to represent them effectively as the major and minor premises of practical syllogisms, the major corresponding loosely to Aristotle's theoretical conclusions about happiness and excellence, and the minor to their 'application' to concrete particulars. This 'application' is difficult in practice, but we can quite easily understand how it is guided by the general concepts it applies. So long as these

rationally expressed syllogisms are our model for conceiving the relationship of habit to deliberation, this relationship is clear enough. The wish for happiness lets us understand vaguely enough what happiness is for human beings, and this understanding grasps - even if inchoately - the very nature of the goods we deliberate about. Deliberation can only grasp in the particulars what excellent wish grasps in general and abstract terms. Whether or not we personally think such rational wishes exist, we can understand how they would guide deliberation authoritatively.

Even if there are such wishes, however, we can doubt whether they correspond exactly to good habits, and whether their preparatory role is exactly the same as that of habits. We have maintained that habituation and habitual moral excellence are not only pre-deliberative but also entirely pre-rational: they are non-rational, probably perceptual and imaginative, motivating cognitions of happiness and excellence. Our most precise description of them has been as motivations for 'what is noble', and we have defined this as what is 'generous' and 'courageous' in a sense broader than any specific excellence. This love of the noble is a kind of aspiration to whatever is expansive and difficult in its demands, bound up with a desire for social recognition by those who are similarly noble. On first glance, this motive is hardly refined and complex enough to constitute the kind of rational description of happiness found in non-theoretical statements like 'philosophy is superior to politics' or 'do what is needed'. These statements express rational wishes for happiness as excellence and are not to be equated with the love of the noble over hastily. The love of the noble is at first glance more primitive and general, being, after all, 'irrational'.

And yet Aristotle states in the *Nicomachean Ethics* X.9 passages we have quoted at length that it is this love of the noble, prepared by habituation, which prepares for the

effectiveness of teaching about excellence and, we infer, the possibility of good deliberation, prudent choice, and in short all of excellence. The question of how these motivations do this work is not equivalent with the question of how rational wishes for happiness do their related work, which we have just described. We have indeed followed Moss in supposing that the pre-rational love of the noble and rationally expressed wish mirror one another in content, and even that rational wish is formed on the basis of this pre-rational nobility. But rational wish is rational, and as such would seem also at least partly dependent on instruction, which addresses itself to the rational soul. It is not equivalent with the pre-rational noble motivations and must contribute to further instruction and deliberate choice differently. The contribution of nobility in motivations to excellence must lie somewhat deeper and earlier than we have yet stated and must happen at the limit of rationally expressed propositions. Rational wish and rational deliberation must work in the ambience, so to speak, of non-rational habits of evaluative perception, desire, and feeling.

As with the general hypothesis of a pre-rational shadow of rational wish's supposition of the end and all concrete work to describe it, the solution to our problem, stated this way, must be speculative. We have formed an idea of what is needed on the basis of Aristotle's text, and now must offer a hypothesis of how to meet that need. Our task now is to indicate how the pre-rational love of the noble could guide the rational expression of correct wishes for happiness and the correct, deliberate choice of specific actions as happy. How can the various levels of instruction and deliberative activity be conceived to encourage (προτρέψασθαι), develop and presuppose a pre-existing tendency to take pride in and measure one's actions by what is 'generous' and 'courageous'? We will limit ourselves to articulating a hypothesis and pointing to some ways it can be assessed.

Our basic idea about how the irrationally noble motivations ground these various cognitions and pursuits of what is good is analogous to how we claimed rational wish guides rational deliberation. On the basis of our understanding of the metaphysics of good in Aristotle, we suggested that all claims made in deliberation about the value of specific actions recognize specific instances of the more basic general concepts of excellence and happiness provided in excellent wish. Specific actions are chosen as good because they most satisfy general ideas about happiness given the limitations of the situation at hand. Likewise we want to suggest that rational wish and all deliberative thought and imagination identifies and desires things as good on the basis of their satisfaction of the pre-rational love of nobility. It is because the noble youth loves what is ‘courageous’ and ‘generous’ and prides himself on achieving difficult and expansive things that an educator (or eventually the youth himself) can point to a suitable object for this pride and the youth will recognize and desire it as worthy of himself, as akin to himself. In other words, noble love and pride predispose the youth to desire excellent activities in advance and to understand and be motivated by evaluative words which point to the nobility of those objects. Grounding the use and the effectiveness of all evaluative language and imagination is this law of attraction of like to like, or - more precisely - a law of motivation and feeling which requires and makes it possible that the noble youth recognize what is noble and take it up as his own.

One support for this general idea of finding a guiding pre-rational standard of value in the love of the noble comes in a passage that recalls the parallelism between irrational love and rational wish. In the midst of explaining why pleasure and pain are fundamental to moral excellence, Aristotle lists three types of objects of choice - the noble, the beneficial, and the pleasant - and states that “[pleasure] accompanies all objects of choice, for the noble and the

beneficial appear (φαίνεται) pleasant.”³⁶⁰ This use of ‘appear pleasant’ reminds us of Jessica Moss’ arguments that pleasure is to irrational cognitive modes like imagination (φαντασία) a form of perceiving things to have value, to be good. If Moss is right that rational and irrational evaluation parallel one another in this way, it seems plausible to suppose that there is in the irrational perception of what is noble a specific form of pleasure which actually serves as a standard of evaluation for the perceiving agent. When Aristotle says in the same section that we all measure our actions by forms of pleasure,³⁶¹ and that noble or base rejoicing and grieving indicate noble or base loves and hatreds,³⁶² we can readily form a similar inference. At a sub-rational level our motivations are formed in relation to specific pleasures and pains, leading us to measure our actions according to the type of pleasure and pain that motivates us. One such type is noble pleasure and pain and the correspondingly noble motivations. As we have described them, noble pleasure is something like pride in what is expansive and difficult, and noble pain is something like shame at what is trivial or narrow. The person who measures his actions by seeking *this* pleasure and avoiding *this* pain will evaluate each object pre-rationally according to how it ‘appears’ worthy of pride or shame.

Another general support for this idea can be found in a relatively obscure passage of the *Eudemian Ethics*.³⁶³ Here Aristotle discusses the role of good fortune (εὐτυχία) in producing good action (εὐπραγίαν). He distinguishes between two types of good fortune and is most interested in the sub-type in which a person consistently distinguishes himself by acting excellently but is unable to provide an explanation of how he decided upon these actions and

³⁶⁰ *EN* II.3.1104b35-1105a1.

³⁶¹ 1105a1.

³⁶² 1104b5-10.

³⁶³ *EE* VII.14, especially 1247b15-35, 1248a15-35. Pierre Aubenque (1964, pp.71-75) has brought this passage to our attention.

apparently does not even deliberate about them. Aristotle concludes that this is not exactly a case of random good fortune but is rather a consequence of the natural tendencies of such people. They appear to him to act by something stronger (κρείττων) than reason. This he identifies as inspiration (ἐνθουσιασμός), which he appears to literally identify with possession by (a) god. These people produce a kind of divination or prophecy (τὴν μαντικήν) which, while not arrived at rationally, achieves the same results as those who deliberate prudently, and just as efficiently.³⁶⁴

It would be imprudent to attach too much weight to this passage, for Aristotle's view in the *Nicomachean Ethics* appears to change. There he does not explicitly entertain the possibility of the irrational but persistently successful divination of right actions, perhaps even weighing against it.³⁶⁵ And yet some of the language he uses to characterize this divine inspiration and its contrast with reason mirrors the language he uses to describe the psychological function of noble habits and their relationship to deliberation. He says that the divinely inspired have right desires but poor reasoning,³⁶⁶ and right desire and right reasoning were the two elements of prudent choice. We are told that inspiration plays the role of first mover and principle of movement in these people's weak deliberations,³⁶⁷ and this was exactly the role of the correct desire for ends in the psychology of choice. Aristotle even goes so far as to say that inspiration works through either experience or 'a habit in using some consideration' (συνήθεια ἐν τῷ σκοπεῖν χρῆσθαι). The phrase is ambiguous, probably because Aristotle is

³⁶⁴ For two intriguing papers on divine possession in Greek culture from Homer to Plato, see Dodds, 'Agamemnon's Apology' and 'The Blessings of Madness' (1951). It is part of Dodd's argument in the latter paper that poetic and prophetic inspiration alike were conceived as divine inspiration. Aristotle's text, particularly at 1247b20-25, seems to recall Plato's attribution of poetry to divine inspiration in *Ion*, by comparing the ethically inspired to 'those who sing (poetry)' (οἱ ᾠδικοί - accepting Solomon's emendation from ἄδικοι).

³⁶⁵ The central argument of *EN* VI.12-13 appears to involve that prudence is *necessary* for good action, not just one path to it.

³⁶⁶ 1247b35.

³⁶⁷ 1248a15-20.

trying to describe a non-rational equivalent of deliberate thought. We can note that σκοπεῖν carries the meaning of ‘looking out’ for something, and that this fits fairly well with the idea that this is some non-rational recognition of good actions. We have already seen the related noun σκόπος and translated it as ‘aim’, ‘view’ or even ‘end’. Aristotle has used it in describing that which pre-rational habitual desires orient us towards and that in light of which deliberate thought considers the value of each action. This also fits well with the present passage, though the noun does not appear - we can imagine the non-rational inspired person habitually looking out for what seems to them to be a good action in light of an end the view of which is the principle of their quasi-deliberations, without being able to rationally articulate what this end is or how they decide that an action satisfies it.

If we are on to something in this interpretation, the divinely inspired guesses of non-rational but successful agents seem to make use, like all deliberation, of pre-rational views of the end of life. We have interpreted these as habitually noble motivations, pride enjoyed and anticipated in what is generous and courageous. What is significant is that in these cases these people are supposedly capable of reliably hitting upon correct, excellent actions. To us this suggests that, despite whatever else might be influencing their guesses, there is in the noble habits some kind of standard of arbitration, some kind of meaningful guidance for the choice of the right object. And if this is so, it seems likely that this guidance is active even in agents with reason and prudence, who can come to decisions with the help of rational decision making and do not need to rely on divinely aided guesses.

All this seems to support our hypothesis that the pre-rational love of the noble orients the soul to some basic characteristic - ‘nobility’ or ‘noble pleasure’ - which sets the basic direction and most general content of all subsequent rational thought about and decision in

favor of what is excellent and happy. This would then be the preparatory contribution of good habituation to excellence. A thorough demonstration of this idea would have to try to show that each of the several levels of practical thought - rational wish, deliberation, and also deliberative imagination - rely on the love of the noble in this way. This would in effect be to flesh out Jessica Moss' proposal of 'practical empiricism' with a keener view of the content of noble habits and ethics as a whole. We simply cannot provide such a demonstration at present, and it would in any case be a highly creative reading working at the margins of the Aristotelian corpus. We would however be amiss if we did not at least offer a few suggestions and possible directions for such a reading.

First take the case of rational wish. We have defined it as an inchoate but rational grasp of the metaphysical structure of happiness. As such it is clearly much more complex and refined than the non-rational prideful desire to distinguish oneself by expansive and difficult, heroic actions. If our hypothesis is correct, however, rational wish is developed on the basis of noble habits to such an extent that it does little else than rationally express a general and complex principle of value implied by the inherent direction of those habits. The psychology of this process is outlined by Moss' 'practical empiricism'. In habitual education, the cultivation of particular noble passions in response to particular actions and objects results in a generalized pride in an aspiration to what the youth imagines as 'noble'. In those who already possess reason, alongside this process will run a parallel process of being educated in the use of words like courage, justice, temperance, noble, base, shameful, and the like. In each case the evaluative meaning of these words will be secured by the noble motivation or passion and the perception conditioning it. One learns to use the word courage, for example, to name the actions in war that one perceives with pride as fearless, effective, and well-intended. Just as

general noble motivations are formed, so general words and concepts are learned and used, so that in the end, for example, one has the concept of ‘doing what is needed’ and has also the generalized striving to find the mark of nobility in each action on its own terms (more on which below).

An account of the derivation of excellent rational wish from irrational noble motivations would have to trace this process of ‘induction’ in its rational and sub-rational moments. For this psychological explanation of the derivation of rational understanding of happiness and excellence from non-rational noble pride’s encounter with various (types of) activities to hold water, we would need an account of how the activities that can be described as happy and excellent in various ways and in various degrees are in exactly that respect also varying expressions of ‘nobility’. We have only begun to indicate how this could be the case when we suggested that all morally excellent actions demand, in their own way, ‘noble’ (expansive and difficult) motivations. This is really only to gesture towards a whole field of study. To develop this suggestion would require an interpretation of each of Aristotle’s character-sketches of the moral excellences in the light of the idea of ‘what is noble’, to see whether this idea can help explain that which is ‘excellent’ and intermediate in each case. A fruitful starting point might be greatness of soul, which following Moss we have suggested to be the most advanced development of pride. If this excellence could be explained as the fulfillment of noble love, and we could follow Aristotle’s suggestion that it is the crown of the excellences to find in it the moral *τέλος* of all the other excellences, we would be well on the way to substantiating our hypothesis.

Similar work would have to be done in the case of the concept of happiness more broadly. We argued in Chapter II.3b that the political and the contemplative life are

hierarchically ordered expressions of one principle of happiness. It would have to be shown that these different degrees of self-sufficiency are ordered as different degrees of that nobility which is desired in pre-rational pride. We have some general indications that this is not implausible in the connection between self-sufficiency and expansiveness or generosity. The moral happiness of the individual and the political community and the contemplative happiness of the philosopher are arguably simultaneously three different degrees of self-sufficiency and of expansiveness. The happiness of the individual, as Aristotle states repeatedly, is inseparable with the happiness of the πόλις, which is greater.³⁶⁸ It would thus be a kind of meanness or baseness to focus on one's own moral happiness without being interested in politics proper. We can therefore imagine that irrational nobility of soul, a prideful obsession with generosity, would demand an interest in politics as well as the thought (wish) that happiness involve politics. But again a similar expansion occurs in the transition from the world of politics to philosophy. For prudence, as Aristotle says, is concerned with the human good, and wisdom (σοφία) with good itself, the good of the cosmos itself and as a whole, the good *simpliciter*.³⁶⁹ We are tempted to see the judgement that philosophy is superior to politics as a development of noble pride: the philosopher who makes this judgement seems to us to be driven by a monstrous ambition to know, possess, and even become the best thing(s) in the cosmos and to not be limited by things 'merely human'. Here, then, is another field of study for those interested in the non-rational grounds of rational wishes - can this suggestion that the hierarchy of happiness is implicitly contained in the law of noble motivations be substantiated?

If rational wishes for happiness and excellence can be explained as the general articulations of objective standards of value implicit in the non-rational pride we have

³⁶⁸ EN I.2.1094b5-10, 1097b5-10, 1142a15-10.

³⁶⁹ EN VI.7.1141a20-1141b5

described, this would be in one sense enough to prove that noble habits orient the soul to the most basic characteristics of value and that all subsequent instruction and deliberation merely develops this general characteristic or law of value explicitly (in rational wish) or finds its specific manifestations in objects (in deliberation). For our account of the guidance of deliberation by rational wish will still hold, with only the addition that both work in the medium of this noble love and with non-rational parallel functions. Every rational grasp of some general relation of value will draw on the general motive of the noble, the fact that the noble youth sees life as an opportunity to win distinction for his generosity and courage. And every particular rational statement about the value of some action will draw on that same motive, and especially the histories of particular noble perceptions and motivations implicit in it, and will be understood by the noble youth as pointing out a particular object or expression of pride. We should be able, then, to return to our discussion of deliberation above and in Chapter II.4, showing how the *choice* of an action as the best available manifestation of happiness involves and presupposes a parallel, non-rational recognition of that action as the highest available expression of noble pride.

We already discussed the cognitive side of this non-rational recognition: the ‘synthetic’ image of deliberative imagination. We suggested that the successive imagination of possible courses of action, prompted by rational thinking about the values that are manifest in the given situation, eventually results in the ‘image’ of an action which ‘seems’ to be best ‘all things considered’. We recognized already there that these alternative options are perceived in alternating states of passion - pleasure and pain tied to impressions of the good and bad in them. We now have developed in some detail an account of noble non-rational passions, namely the various forms pride and shame taken in the perception of what is ‘noble’ and ‘base’

in our own actions primarily, and perhaps in further modifications (for example, envy and despising or pity), the actions of others. If we were to apply a more robust concept of these noble passions to the work of deliberative imagination, we would perhaps arrive at an idea of how the non-rational love of the noble guides deliberative imagination.

The idea would be that as deliberative imagination, either spontaneously or on rational direction, considers each possible action and its relevant context, the well-habituated lover of the noble will ‘see’ actions that make expansive and difficult gestures and those that are narrow, trivial or shortsighted. He will prospectively feel pride or shame in such an action, as the case may be. He will ‘see’, for example, an action that while scorning danger will lead to defeat very shortly, and ‘see’ a shortsighted outburst of bravado, will feel in advance the shame that comes from being known to have been so hot-headed as to let his desire to fight undermine the city. Conversely, he will feel anticipatory pride in an action he ‘sees’ shows the power to look far in the future and secure resounding victory by exercising patience, resisting the temptation to dive into battle, fighting intelligently and with reserve. On our account the noble soul will *dilate* at this prospect and see its rightful claim to pride in such an action. Deliberative imagination will essentially be a process of partly rationally-guided exercises in imagining and feeling the nobility of such alternative actions. When all relevant context is taken into account and one identifies the ‘best’ option, this resulting choice will not be only a rational decision. The noble soul will *feel* the least hesitation, will least anticipate shame and regret, will feel a dilating sense of pride, will feel the need to take the action up, will ‘feel it is right’, as the expression goes.³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ To substantiate this suggestion would require studying examples of prudent choice and the rationale behind them to find them expressive of a sub-rational recognition of nobility which *parallels* the ‘all things considered’ judgement of excellence and happiness we studied in Chapter II.4.

Notice that we have thus come to the point of a hypothesis that explains how the ruling element in moral excellence - prudent choice - is grounded in and prepared for by non-rational habits. If our suggestion is sound, noble habits of motivation will pre-rationally furnish the soul with a basic love of what is noble, which contains in itself a kind of implicit law defining the nature of happiness, excellence, and thus the value of all actions. Rational instruction will presuppose and make use of the basic tendencies of noble love, developing explicitly and in detail the general categories of value it reveals in things (in rational wish) as well as the ability to identify those categories' best manifestations (in rational and imaginative deliberation). If the motivational and affective life of the youth does not center around this love of the noble, he will lack the basic reference points and concerns that would make instruction about happiness and excellence effective. For this instruction merely unfolds what is implicit already in the love of the noble, letting it crystallize into wishes for the whole of happiness and the ability to choose nobly in each of our actions. As Aristotle says in the related context of the importance of a definition of happiness for theoretical discussion of ethics, "the principle (*ἀρχή*) seems to be more than half the whole, and many of the things we seek become clear on account of it".³⁷¹

One outstanding problem about the rational element of excellence remains from Chapter II. There we noted that there is a dispute about the precise function of deliberation, with some authors suggesting that deliberation has the power to 'constitute' ends, to 'unfold a concept of happiness'. Our arguments and hypotheses suggest that this view is mistaken. For in Chapter II.4b, and again in this section, we have provided an account of deliberation which

³⁷¹ *EN* I.7.1098b5. The context is not directly about the content of habitual education, but in the same passage we are told that some principles are known by habituation, and on top of this the whole thrust of our work supports the idea.

restricts it to finding the best instantiation of general principles. That this account is Aristotle's is indicated by the fact that he persistently claims that rational wish or noble habituation provides the soul with a grasp of the end - happiness. This does not seem to be a grasp on so general a proposition as 'happiness is the end', without any more specific definition - such a general grasp hardly distinguishes the noble from the base, the well-raised from the 'barbarian'. Rather, it is an orientation to the true end of life - irrationally speaking, noble pleasure, and in rational wish the full but inchoate articulation of the entire concept of excellence as happiness. It seems to us that Aristotle plainly intends to restrict deliberation to the 'means' or the 'instantiations' of the general pre-defined concept of happiness that guides it. At the same time, our interpretation has perhaps opened up some space for those who wish to preserve a strongly 'constitutive' role for reason generally, and in particular rational wish. For we have hypothesized that rational wish somehow works to explicitly develop the implicit contents of noble motivations. What this 'development' looks like in concrete terms, however, is an open question. Rational wish could end up looking very like deliberation in that all its relevant general content is somehow already implied in the noble habits which underlie it.³⁷²

³⁷² We should note that those interpreters who argue for an expansive role for deliberation, to the point even of denying that 'irrational' excellence provides the ends of action, also stake their claim on another point (see here especially Irwin 1980). They note that for Aristotle choice is free and responsible, and that the scope of responsibility is equal to the scope of rational decision. If rational decision is guided by unchosen, irrationally given goals, choice can hardly be free, they seem to imply. Therefore they develop interpretations on which rational wish is the product of deliberation and no significant element of choice is irrationally determined. This problem is very difficult and is beyond our scope. We can note however that the concept of freedom of intention is hardly as thoroughly developed in Aristotle as in modern philosophy (as Irwin 1980 notes), and the modern reader is likely to be shocked with the insensitivity Aristotle seems to show to it in his most thorough discussion of responsibility (*EN* III.5). What is clear to us, however, is that Aristotle thought of the ends of action as given *before* deliberation even as he says deliberation is the direct seat of responsibility. Whether some account of freedom palatable to modern ears can nonetheless be found in Aristotle's thinking must turn on two questions. First of all, precisely what 'freedom' is allowed deliberation in its inquiry into what satisfies in a particular situation the concepts of happiness provided in advance by wish? Secondly, what 'freedom' might be allowed rational wish itself in developing the contents of non-rational noble motivations? The second question lies so far afield of Aristotle's own concerns that it will be capable only of a highly speculative answer, perhaps one that makes use of later concepts of free and rational intentions (such as, for example, Moss' use of Stoic concepts of assent to explain rational wish and the relation between belief and appearance generally, 2012, pp. 112-118, 223-231).

We have focused heavily on the rational and commanding element in excellence, hypothesizing how choice is guided by and develops non-rational noble motivations. However, we noted in Chapter I that full excellence is not merely rational, prudent choice. Aristotle also holds it is necessary for the irrational soul to listen to and be obedient to that rational guidance. Choices must not only be made, they must be implemented, and Aristotle is keenly aware of the phenomenon of ‘incontinence’ (ἀκρασία), in which choice is overthrown by disobedient passions. Part of the function of good habituation is to ensure obedience on the part of the ‘non-rational’ soul. Now we have shown, however, that the non-rational soul is not merely passive or mechanical. It is determined by its own form of cognition of what is good, namely the love of the noble.³⁷³ Obedience cannot be explained passively or mechanically, therefore. It must be determined by some non-rational cognition if it is to ‘listen’ to reason. How does the non-rational evaluative cognition we have recognized - the love of the noble - prepare for obedience?

Jessica Moss has prepared us with part of an answer with her interpretation of the motivational conflict underlying continence and incontinence.³⁷⁴ In sum her suggestion relies on the fact that parallel to rational choice’s recognition of goods (itself dependent on non-rational recognitions) continually run non-rational, perceptually-determined motivations, appetites and passions. In continent and incontinent souls, these non-rational motivations are driven to objects which, rationally speaking, are recognized as bad, but which appear good non-rationally. Thus in the classic examples of physical pleasures, even though a person may have rationally decided that it is not the time for sweets, the perception of a plate of cookies

³⁷³ This is supported by the fact that shame is a function of the obedient or at least ‘listening’ irrational soul, and Aristotle characterizes shame as having a fairly advanced ability to discriminate objects deserving shame, or at least to respond to and recognize their rational discrimination (*Rhe* II.6, especially 1383b10-1384a20).

³⁷⁴ 2012, 100-133.

can excite the non-rational desire for the taste of chocolate as a good. In incontinent souls, these motivations temporarily overpower the rational motivations and blot them from consciousness.

Now we have suggested that non-rational recognitions of particular objects as good or bad are grounded in and supported by more general tendencies of motivation. Thus the desire for sweet flavors, irrespective of the circumstances or of the rational recognition that these circumstances demand another action, would be the indication of a ‘base’ soul excessively interested in personal, physical pleasure. Our suggestion is that the degree of *strength* with which noble motives have inhabited the soul pre-rationally will therefore correspond inversely to the tendency to perceive ‘trivial’ goods with interest. To the extent that a soul has its ‘eye’ fixed on the mark of generosity and courage and prides itself on this, it will register opportunities for physical pleasure, or other merely personal goods like status for its own sake or every detail of reputation, with indifference. Conversely, to the extent that ‘private’ motivations have not been ‘rubbed off’ by education and still grip the soul, these opportunities will prove interesting and distracting, no matter whether some other noble tendency helps the soul make correct choices at the same time.

In other words, we suggest that just as noble motivations help guide the soul in making correct choices, so too the predominance of noble motivations will help explain the obedience of the soul to those choices. The soul in which base and noble desires are not competing with one another will be ‘in harmony’ with itself and will obey its own commands. The soul in which these tendencies compete will be in discord and distracted by conflicting motives - if it manages to choose rightly it will still have difficulty implementing its choices. The predominance of habitually noble motives over ‘base’ ones therefore helps ground not only the

commanding element of excellence, but also the ‘obedient’ element.

Conclusion

We have therefore offered what I would term an ‘answer in principle’ to our question about the contribution habits make to moral education, a working hypothesis to be strengthened or weakened by further interpretation of the relevant parts of Aristotelian philosophy. We have suggested that habits are non-rational general tendencies of motivation, and that good habits are tendencies to be motivated in noble ways. We have interpreted this to mean to tend to stake one’s sense of pride on one’s ability to do what is ‘generous’ and ‘courageous’ in a sense not limited to any particular sphere of excellence, but rather indicating a general opposition to what is ‘private’ or ‘base’, i.e. trivial, narrow, short-sighted, merely personal and easy, which the noble soul views with a sense of shame. We have suggested that these basic tendencies of perception, motivation and affection inflect the entire cognitive and affective world of excellent persons and more particularly that they ground the development and the exercise of the various capacities associated with excellence.

More precisely, we have suggested that noble motivations underlie and provide a pre-rational mirror image of the content of so-called ‘rational wishes’, which somehow develop explicitly the evaluative standards implicit in noble tendencies. These rational wishes, as well as their underlying irrationally noble motives, then guide the rational and imaginative work of deliberation to discover what, in a given particular situation, is ‘happiest’, ‘best’, or ‘most noble’. This discovery is a decision, which can be viewed in its rational aspect as the derivation of an action from a major and minor premise or in its irrational aspect as the anticipation of the greatest available pride in a course of action. Finally, we have reason to think that the

preponderance of noble motivations in the soul helps secure obedience to such rational choices, for it ensures that the perpetually active sub-rational tendencies of evaluative perception, motivation and affection are ruled by the motive of the noble just as are the rational and imaginative exercises of deliberation. We can by such an interpretation think of noble motivations as the firm and correctly directed tendencies of love and hatred of which rational wish, deliberation, choice, and obedience (the various elements of moral excellence as a whole) are the natural and complex modifications or developments.

It is important to remember that we view this account as essentially a hypothesis or working interpretation rather than a complete and decisive demonstration. We do not claim to have adequately shown how each of these stages of cognition and motivation are modifications of the love of the noble. We claim only that Aristotle's thinking seems to require or imply that this is the case and have taken this as license to offer a suggestion. We have therefore taken some pains in this chapter to point out some avenues for future research into these ideas.

Conclusion

We have sketched out what I have called an ‘answer in principle’ to the question of how habituation prepares for full excellence. We have followed Aristotle’s suggestion that habituation instills in the youth a ‘love of what is noble’ which prepares for and underlies all effective teaching about excellence and use of reason in forming decisions. We have characterized this noble love as the staking of pride on one’s ability to be ‘courageous’ and ‘generous’ - to overcome narrow and trivial motivations for the sake of what is expansive and difficult. We have suggested that this noble pride grounds a basic and uniform cognitive and affective movement, something like a ‘recognizing’ and ‘taking up’ of what is worthy of itself, and that this movement permeates all habitual and rational education and particularly the formation of rational wish, skill in deliberating, and tendencies to obey reason, as well as their exercises.

As we have emphasized several times, we view this answer as a hypothesis in many respects. We have proposed it on the basis of the analysis of many texts - particularly texts analyzing the faculty of choice, texts about the parts and order of education, texts detailing habitual ‘conditioning’ and the role of affections therein, texts about the affective life of the vicious and virtuous, texts about decision making, and texts about happiness and its scientific study. The reason we drew on so many areas of Aristotle’s philosophy to form our hypothesis is that habit is an underdeveloped concept in his thought. Although we have seen Aristotle form definite and consistent views about it, its precise cognitive status and affective qualities are not his main concern. He is content to let it stand as a pre-deliberative and pre-philosophical ‘intention’ or ‘view’ of happiness, excellence, and its intermediate realization, focusing on defining these realities in the various disciplines of philosophy. We were therefore forced

constantly to suggest inferences from these realities to how they ‘appear’ to noble pride before deliberation and philosophical inquiry, a task difficult enough if it were always clear how the realities themselves and the different sciences studying them relate and explain one another - which it is not. We therefore often limited ourselves with hypotheses and some suggestions as to how they could be ‘tested’ in further interpretation.

The reader may wonder why we have chosen a topic apparently so underdeveloped in our primary source and requiring a method so circuitous. Might it not be better to let the clearer parts of Aristotle’s philosophy, which he developed in more detail and with more rigor, speak for themselves? This is a question touching on what the writer takes to be the philosophical significance of this type of inquiry - for the choice of a topic in the history of philosophy is always made on the background of the historian’s own philosophical concerns.

Briefly then: we live in an age in which many philosophers have become suspicious of the idealizing interpretations of the human being, the natural world, and the divine in which most philosophy before the 19th and 20th centuries dealt. In the last two centuries we have witnessed a proliferation of calls to return to ‘the concrete’, ‘original intuitions’, ‘experience’, ‘scientific fact’, ‘honesty’, ‘ordinary language’, ‘analysis and criticism’, ‘existence’, ‘practice’, and other such apparently more basic, immediate, modest and meaningful starting points and limitations of inquiry. In some quarters, there has been considerable effort to interpret the older systematic methods and conclusions not only as divergences from the chosen starting point but as developments from it. Thus large-scale theoretical approaches themselves are sometimes interpreted as manifestations of psychological illness and health or the rational articulation of pre-philosophical material, social, political, cultural and existential conditions or practices.

Aristotle's gestures towards the way habituation prepares for virtue and philosophy suggest to us a locus for this sort of inquiry to whatever extent we hold his philosophical theories in suspicion as theories. Can we trace the theories of the various Aristotelian sciences touching in diverse ways on the human good, to pre-philosophical motivations and the practices and conditions that form them? How might pre-rational motivations provide the basic atmosphere for these sciences and for the rational pursuit of virtue? How do philosophical judgements work with, develop and - perhaps - betray, their pre-rational conditions and motivations? Do we accept or reject the claim that *philosophia* as practiced by Aristotle or Plato, for instance, represents the *fulfillment* of that vigorous and heroic pride in the noble which we have traced in the notion of habits?

These questions are not exactly Aristotelian in spirit or method, but they are made possible in part by the central place assigned to habits and habitual education in Aristotle's reflections, and Plato's before him. If we have been at all successful in this thesis, we have at least sketched this place sympathetically and without grave distortions, making possible further exegetical, historical and critical inquiries.

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