

Ethics for Rational Animals

A Study of the Cognitive Psychology at the Basis of
Aristotle's Ethics



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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this dissertation is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes. All the sources have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

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Aristotle is, at the same time, a student of psychology and a student of ethics. He takes the two disciplines to be linked: the ethicist should know something about the human soul. In this thesis, I start from a study of Aristotle's cognitive theory to shed new light on his account of virtue, moral education and practical wisdom. I draw three main conclusions. First, I argue that eliminating certain false evaluative appearances is necessary to achieve virtue. It is widely assumed that achieving virtue requires eliminating vicious desires. I show that it also requires eliminating the false evaluative appearances that give rise to vicious desires. Second, I show that moral education addresses first and foremost the workings of our perceptual-recognitional faculties. Moral education trains us to recognise fine things (*kala*) perceptually. Third, I argue that Aristotle develops a notion of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as a distinctive kind of rational excellence. Unlike other rational excellences, practical wisdom is persuasive as well as discriminative.

Although its goal is to reconstruct Aristotle's views on the links between ethics and psychology, this study is not guided by historical interest only. Some details of Aristotle's cognitive theory are outdated. However, his observations on attention, on rational and non-rational cognition, and on practical and theoretical thought are always deep and often persuasive. The theory of virtue, practical rationality and moral education Aristotle develops taking into account these observations is controversial, but it continues to call for our close philosophical consideration and assessment.

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Introduction

It is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue, since we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. By human virtue we mean virtue of the soul. If this is so, it is clear that the political scientist must in some way know about the soul, just as someone setting out to heal the eyes must know about the whole body as well ... Hence the political scientist as well [as the student of nature] must study the soul.¹

Politicians and ethicists are, in a way, doctors of the soul. They must know what a healthy or virtuous soul is like, and their goal is to preserve and enhance its virtues and to heal its ailments or vices. In this passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle draws a lesson from this medical analogy. He argues that the political scientist should study the soul, just as a doctor should study the body.

In this dissertation, I take my cue from this suggestion. I argue that carefully studying Aristotle's psychology is important for those who seek to understand his ethical theory. In particular, his views on virtue and moral education can be elucidated in light of his theory of cognition. Understanding his account of cognitive conflict, rational and non-rational cognition, practical cognition and evaluative cognition helps us to understand what he took a healthy soul to be like, and how he thought we might acquire one.

Aristotle developed a sophisticated account of the cognitive make up of the kind of being at the centre of his ethics: the rational animal. Rational animals are, at the same time, similar enough to other animated beings to fall within the study of general psychology, and peculiar enough to be the subject of special consideration. In the first two chapters of the dissertation I trace the emergence of the peculiarities of the rational animal from the general account of animal and divine cognition. The rational animal has a non-rational side in common with the beasts and a rational side

¹*NE* 1102a14–24, translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are based, sometimes loosely, on Irwin 1999.

in common with the gods. Rational animals are however peculiar in so far as their cognitive make-up enables the rational side and the non-rational side to communicate.

Aristotle's account of the workings of our peculiar yet shared cognitive abilities also differentiates between contexts where cognition aims at action and contexts where it does not. The first kind of cognition is practical, the second theoretical. In chapter three to six of this study I focus on his account of practical cognition in its rational and non-rational forms. I look at the cognitive set up Aristotle thought necessary for a virtuous human life and for virtuous human actions. My focus on practical cognition comes with a cost: I leave very much to the side the account of theoretical cognition and theoretical contemplation which is very prominent especially at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Nonetheless, focusing on practical cognition has the virtue of enabling a closer consideration of the specifically human realm of ethically relevant action: while contemplation is shared between humans and divinities, human rational action is distinct from the other animals' purposeful behaviour.

I draw three main conclusions from this study of Aristotle's cognitive theory with a view to his ethics. First, my study suggests that eliminating false evaluative appearances that give rise to desires to act viciously is necessary to be virtuous, or good. It is very clear that achieving virtue requires eliminating vicious desires, as well as vicious actions. I show that it also requires eliminating, and not merely contradicting, the false evaluative appearances at the basis of desires to act viciously. This is because these false evaluative appearances generate vicious desires even when we are aware of their falsity.

Second, my study shows that moral education involves more than building the right patterns of association between pleasure and objects worthy of pursuit: it involves a special kind of perceptual-recognitional training. In particular, moral education involves training young children to perceptually recognise actions and characters which present a specific evaluative feature: fineness (*to kalon*).

Third, my analysis suggests that Aristotle developed a distinctive notion of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). Practical wisdom must be persuasive as well as explanatory. Other rational excellences are concerned with grasping and constructing universal explanatory accounts. For example, scientific knowledge grasps universal explanatory accounts of natural phenomena. Practical wisdom is, too, concerned with grasping explanations. For example, it grasps why the particular action the practically wise person chooses to do is good or fine. In addition, however, the explanations of practical wisdom must be persuasive and effective against false evaluative appearances at the basis of vicious desires.

These conclusions are not, I think, of mere historical interest. The thesis that eliminating some false evaluative appearances is necessary to live the good life is worth our close attention, even if it might seem to set too high a standard for the acquisition of virtue. The thesis that moral education isn't blind is persuasive, even for those who, unlike Aristotle, don't believe it should include musical education. Finally, some details of Aristotle's theory of cognition are certainly outdated. The same doesn't hold, however, for the conceptual distinctions he draws between rational and non-rational cognition and the special consideration he assigns to practical cognition and practical wisdom.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 1, I start from the division between the rational part of the soul and the non-rational part of the soul. I argue that a study of *De Anima*, the *Rhetoric*, the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Metaphysics* can be used to reconstruct the cognitive make-up of the rational and non-rational parts of the soul. The rational part of the soul is a thinking part, and its ability to think is characterized by the possession of concepts and also by the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts. These abilities are precisely those that the non-rational part lacks, for despite being desiderative and perceptual, it cannot think.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the non-rational part struggles to communicate with the rational part. Non-rational appearances persist when the rational part declares them false, and non-rational recalcitrant desires persist when we are aware that their objects are overall bad or harmful. I then argue that the peculiar features of *human* cognition explain why communication between the parts is, despite these difficulties, possible. These special features are our expanded perceptual range and the fact that our attention can be narrowed.

In Chapter 3, I investigate Aristotle's account of practical cognition, or of cognition with a view to action. I argue that there is an important distinction between practical cognition of evaluative features such as pleasantness or goodness and practical cognition of non-evaluative features. While we do not act on non-evaluative appearances if we are aware of their falsity, we can act on evaluative appearances while aware of their falsity. Aristotle believes that we might eat foods that look good while aware that they are not good, but he doesn't think we might try to fetch a small looking object while aware that it is in fact huge.

In Chapter 4, I explain the difference between evaluative practical cognition and non-evaluative practical cognition in light of the connection between evaluative cognition and desires. I argue that evaluative cognition can give rise to desires to act provided it is not produced by the thinker or perceiver at will. In light of this account

Aristotle can explain why often we desire things we know are bad for us. When we involuntarily imagine something as good, or pleasant, we can be attracted to it even if we take it to be, in fact, bad. This is why, in order to become virtuous, it is not enough to contradict involuntary false evaluative cognitions that cause desires to act viciously. These cognitions must be removed.

In Chapter 5, I argue that there are three fundamental guises under which we grasp our practical goals: the pleasant, the advantageous and the fine. These evaluative features are not equally accessible to all perceivers: all animals can perceptually recognise pleasant things, only political animals can perceptually recognise advantageous things, and only humans can perceptually recognise fine things. Political animals (i.e. humans, as well as bees, ants, etc.) can perceptually recognise advantageous things because they have a better memory than “scattered” animals. Only humans can perceptually recognise fine things because human perception can undergo a sophisticated kind of training, a training Aristotle describes in his account of musical education. This training is important for the elimination of false evaluative appearances at the basis of vicious desires because it enables the non-rational part to follow the rational part’s admonitions to pursue what is fine.

In Chapter 6, I argue that practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is importantly distinct from other rational excellences such as scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*). While scientific knowledge is only discriminative, practical wisdom is, simultaneously, persuasive and discriminative: it grasps true explanatory accounts and generates rational pleasures that are suitable to persuade the non-rational part out of false evaluative appearances that cause vicious desires. The persuasive nature of practical wisdom suggest that the requirements for rational excellence are more demanding for practical thought than they are for theoretical thought: we do not count as practically wise if we are, for any reason, unable to persuade our non-rational part out of its vicious desires.

Chapter 1

Aristotle's Cognitive Psychology

1.1 From the *Nicomachean Ethics* to *De Anima*

For Aristotle, not every issue that lies within the concern of psychology is relevant for the study of ethics:

We have discussed [sc. the soul] sufficiently in our popular works too, and we should use this discussion: for example, we said that one [sc. part] of the soul is non-rational, and the other rational. Whether these are distinguished as the parts of the body (or anything that is divisible in parts), or whether they are two in definition and inseparable in nature like the concave and the convex doesn't matter for the present purposes.¹

For the ethicist's purposes, it doesn't matter whether the parts of the soul can exist separately from each other, or whether they are merely separable in definition. The distinction between the rational part and the non-rational part, however, is important. But what is this distinction about? Aristotle does give us a suggestion about where to look for an answer to this question: he mentions the "popular works" (*exoterikoi logoi*). Unfortunately, his suggestion isn't very helpful. There is widespread disagreement among scholars on what exactly the popular works are supposed to be, and the only uncontroversial assumption seems to be that they are lost.²

¹λέγεται δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐξωτερικοῖς λόγοις ἀρκούντως ἓνια, καὶ χρηστέον αὐτοῖς· οἷον τὸ μὲν ἄλογον αὐτῆς εἶναι, τὸ δὲ λόγον ἔχον. ταῦτα δὲ πότερον διώρισται καθάπερ τὰ τοῦ σώματος μέρη καὶ πᾶν τὸ μεριστόν, ἢ τῷ λόγῳ δύο ἐστὶν ἀχώριστα πεφυκότα καθάπερ ἐν τῇ περιφερείᾳ τὸ κυρτόν καὶ τὸ κοῖλον, οὐθὲν διαφέρει πρὸς τὸ παρόν. *NE* 1102a26–31.

²See Susemihl and Hicks 1895, pp. 561 ff. for a reconstruction of the different theories concerning the exoteric treatises, and see Hutchinson and Johnson 2015 for the possible exception of the *Protrepticus*. According to some interpreters, these works were not by Aristotle. According to others, they were his works addressed to a wider audience and written in dialogic form. According to others still, they were his lectures. In this chapter, I don't take a position in this debate. All I suggest is

Even though we might not have access to the original source Aristotle has in mind, a comparative study of his ethical and psychological works can help us getting a better grip on the distinction between the rational and non-rational part of the soul. The rational part's case is the easiest to settle. At *NE* 1098a4–5, the strictly speaking rational (*logon echon*) part of the soul is called a thinking or reflecting part (*dianooumenon*). This suggests that it corresponds to the intellect or the thinking part of the soul (*to dianoētikon*) in *De Anima*.³ The rational part is not only intellectual, but also desiderative, in so far as it can be the seat of rational desires (such as wishes or decisions).⁴

The structure of the non-rational part of the soul is more complex. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the non-rational part is divided into two sub-parts. The first sub-part is the nutritive one, which is “plantlike” and shared among all living things. This part is not relevant for the study of ethics.⁵ The second sub-part is more difficult to characterize, but a series of identity claims in the two *Ethics*, the *Politics* and in *De Anima* lead us to think that it is closely related to the perceptual part, as well as being the seat of non-rational emotions and desires. In the *Politics*, Aristotle calls it the passionate part of the soul, while in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he calls it the desiderative part (*to orektikon*).⁶ In the *Eudemian Ethics*, the desiderative and perceptual parts are associated and contrasted to the nutritive part: at *EE* 1219b24–26, the reason why virtuous and vicious people are almost alike when asleep is because then their desiderative and perceptual part is imperfect, or inactive.⁷

Hence, the non-rational part of the soul whose study is relevant for an ethical theory is desiderative and perceptual. In addition, this perceptual and desiderative

that, in absence of better evidence, *De Anima*, the *Rhetoric*, the *Metaphysics* and the *Analytics* are good places to look for some suggestions on how to draw the distinction between the rational part and the non-rational part of the soul. See also Walsh 1960, Ch. III for a similar approach, and for a reconstruction of the different theses concerning the development of Aristotle's scientific and moral psychology. For a further defence of the thesis that the study of ethics requires knowledge of some aspects of psychology, see Irwin 1980 and Shields 2015. Shields in particular concentrates on how the political scientist must have a deep grasp of psychology in order to properly understand the function argument.

³*DA* 414a30–32.

⁴I discuss its desiderative side further in chapter 1.4. See *DA* 432b4–7, *Rhet.* 1369a3–4, *EE* 1225b25–26. The view that the rational part is the seat of rational desires is widespread, but to some extent controversial (see Moss 2012, pp. 162 ff and fn. 20 and Price 1995, pp. 102–111 for a summary of the problems it raises). Here I take it to be correct, following e.g. Cooper 1989, p. 32 and Broadie 1991, pp. 68 ff.

⁵*NE* 1102a35–b1 ff. and *EE* 1219b36–40.

⁶*Pol.* 1254b8 and *NE* 1102b29.

⁷See Moss 2012, ch 4.2, for a similar analysis of the identity claims.

part has in a way a share in *logos* despite its non-rational nature. It listens to *logos* and obeys *logos*, especially in the case of temperate and continent people.⁸

In this chapter, I focus on what Aristotle’s denial of *logos* strictly speaking to the non-rational part of the soul amounts to.⁹ First, on the basis of *De Anima* and the *Rhetoric*, I argue that having *logos* requires the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts. Second, I argue that the discussion of perception in the *Posterior Analytics* and the account of experience in the *Metaphysics* show that the possession of *logos* also requires the possession of concepts. In conclusion, I consider how the lack or possession of concepts and of the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts might characterise respectively the desiderative perceptual part and the desiderative thinking part of the human soul.

1.2 Having *Logos*

In *De Anima*, Aristotle draws a close connection between thought and the possession of *logos*. At *DA* 427b6–14, we find a distinction between faculties and states which require the possession of *logos* and faculties and states which do not. Thinking, which includes practical knowledge, scientific knowledge as well as false and true belief, requires the possession of *logos*. Perception does not.¹⁰ Their lack of *logos* explains why non-human animals cannot think, though they can perceive.

Interpreters and translators disagree about how *logos* should be translated when it is connected to thought and it is used to mark the distinction between us and the other animals. Hicks and Hamlyn choose “reason”, Polansky doesn’t translate it.¹¹ Moss suggests “speech”.¹²

⁸*NE* 1102b26–29 and *EE* 1219b28–31. Compare with the perceptual part in *De Anima*:

It is difficult to say whether the perceptual part of the soul has *logos* or is non-rational. καὶ τὸ αἰσθητικόν, ὃ οὔτε ὡς ἄλογον οὔτε ὡς λόγον ἔχον θείη ἄν τις ῥαδίως. *DA* 432a30–b1.

⁹See chapter 2 for an account of how the non-rational part can listen to *logos* in a way (*pōs*). Aristotle makes it clear that only the rational part has *logos* strictly speaking or fully at *NE* 1103a3 ff.

¹⁰In *DA* 427b6–14, Aristotle talks about thought and thinking (*nous* and *noein*) broadly understood as including high and low intellectual achievements. For the thesis that *nous* shouldn’t be identified with ordinary thinking see Burnyeat 2008. Burnyeat’s argument cannot apply to this passage because here *nous* includes false belief.

¹¹Polansky 2007, p. 409, Hicks 1907, p. 123 and Hamlyn 1968, p. 130.

¹²Moss 2014, p. 186 fn. 13. In her view *logos* means in ethical and psychological contexts “explanatory account”, and rationality is “the ability to grasp explanatory accounts”. I agree that having *logos* involves the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts. However, I think that this description is not exhaustive, for the possession of *logos* also requires the possession of concepts (see below). For

Both reason and speech seem to me good translations for *logos*, in so far as they are good candidates for what sets us apart from the other animals. However, until an explanation of what having reason or having speech amounts to is provided, the relationship between *logos* and thought remains unexplained.¹³ Furthermore, it is very plausible to believe that Aristotle, like Plato, considered speaking and reasoning to be closely related. For example, at *Sophist* 263e13 ff., the Eleatic Stranger suggests that both reasoning (*dianoia*) and the statements that express thoughts in language involve discourse (*dialogon*). The only difference between the two is that in the first case discourse is silent and internal, while in the second case it is external and loud.¹⁴

How can we determine, then, what Aristotle means by having *logos* when he connects it with thought? A good place to start is the connection between belief, i.e. one of products of thought, and *logos*:

Belief (*doxa*) implies conviction (*pistis*), (for it is impossible to believe for those who aren't convinced) and conviction implies persuasion. And no animal is ever convinced, but many have *phantasia*. Every belief is accompanied by conviction, conviction by persuasion (*pepeisthai*), persuasion by *logos*. Although some animals have *phantasia*, they don't have *logos*.¹⁵

Aristotle here explains why non-human animals lack belief, though they might have *phantasia*. The cornerstone of the explanation is the lack of *logos*. Beliefs require conviction, which in turn requires persuasion.¹⁶ And persuasion requires *logos*. Hence, those who lack *logos* can't have beliefs. By pointing to persuasion and conviction, this passage indicates where to look in order to find out why having *logos* is necessary for thought and belief. The obvious place to look at in order to elucidate Aristotle's views

another study of the connection between thought and *logos*, see Johansen 2012, pp. 222 ff. Johansen argues that thought, in all its forms, is concerned with its proper objects, i.e. *logoi*. These *logoi* can be scientific accounts, rhetorical discourses, etc. I agree with the general point that what is distinctive of thought is the ability to grasp *logoi*, and I look in particular at what is required in order to grasp *logoi*.

¹³Moss 2014, pp. 186 ff. raises this issue.

¹⁴For the connection between this passage of *De Anima* and the *Sophist* see Sorabji 1993, pp. 37 and ff. Cf. Isocrates, *Nicocles* 6–10, *Antidosis* 253 and *Panegyricus* 48 for the view that *logos* differentiates us from the other animals and can be external or internal.

¹⁵δόξη μὲν ἔπεται πίστις (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δοξάζοντα οἷς δοκεῖ μὴ πιστεύειν), τῶν δὲ θηρίων οὐθενὶ ὑπάρχει πίστις, φαντασία δὲ πολλοῖς. [ἔτι πάση μὲν δόξῃ ἀκολουθεῖ πίστις, πιστεῖ δὲ τὸ πεπεισθαι, πειθοῖ δὲ λόγος· τῶν δὲ θηρίων ἐνίοις φαντασία μὲν ὑπάρχει, λόγος δ' οὐ. *DA* 428a19–25. Translations of *De Anima* are loosely based on Hicks 1907 and Hamlyn 1968.

¹⁶Aristotle's thesis that *doxai* require persuasion in addition to conviction suggests that his notion of belief is more restricted than ours (which perhaps explains why he denies beliefs to non-human animals. On this point see also Sorabji 1993, p. 37). His account implies that judgements based on the acceptance of perceptual reports, say, would not count as beliefs because they do not require persuasion.

on persuasion and conviction is his theory of argumentation in general, and, as I will show in what follows, the *Rhetoric* in particular.¹⁷

In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle elaborates on what is required in order to form a conviction (*pistis*):

We now proceed to show that not only dialectical and demonstrative syllogisms proceed according to the schemes we described, but rhetorical syllogisms too and in general any attempt to produce conviction by any method. Everything we are convinced about comes either from a syllogism or from induction.¹⁸

Convictions (without which there is no belief) are formed on the basis of arguments (syllogisms or inductive arguments) of different sorts: they might be rhetorical, demonstrative or dialectical.¹⁹ The ability to grasp an argument lies at the basis of our ability to be convinced and persuaded. The related ability to syllogise is mentioned in *De Anima* 434a10 as what grounds our ability to form beliefs (*doxai*) and it is distinctive of deliberative thought (see e.g. *Mem.* 453a4–14). Hence, it is a good candidate to be what our possession of *logos* requires.

In order to explore the nature of this thinking ability in its simplest and most general application, it is useful to look at rhetorical arguments (enthymemes and examples) as a case study.²⁰ Focusing on a specific case study is justified in light of the general unity of the theory of argumentation: since conviction arises from induction and syllogisms, and rhetorical arguments are similar to dialectical ones and

¹⁷Sorabji 1996 suggests a similar interpretive strategy, but doesn't elaborate on this point. Labarrière 1984, pp. 31 ff. relies on a *critère rhétorique* in order to describe what having *logos* amounts to. He suggests that this ability implies the ability to discuss and persuade in a public space. In Sorabji 1993, pp. 37 and ff. Sorabji argues that the "rhetorical criterion" can help us determining the nature of both loud speech and internal thinking or reasoning. He does not discuss more in detail the capacities which are necessary to grasp the most basic rhetorical arguments.

¹⁸ὅτι δ' οὐ μόνον οἱ διαλεκτικοὶ καὶ ἀποδεικτικοὶ συλλογισμοὶ διὰ τῶν προειρημένων γίνονται σχημάτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ῥητορικοὶ καὶ ἀπλῶς ἠτισοῦν πίστις καὶ ἡ καθ' ὅποιαν οὖν μέθοδον, νῦν ἂν εἴη λεκτέον. ἅπαντα γὰρ πιστεύομεν ἢ διὰ συλλογισμοῦ ἢ ἐξ ἐπαγωγῆς. *A.Pr.* 68b9–14. Trans. based on Tredennick 1962.

¹⁹I use the term syllogism in the broadest possible way (as it is used in the passage above) so as to include all the possible types of rhetorical, scientific and dialectical deductive arguments, whether or not they meet the required standards of validity and whether or not they involve a fixed number of premisses and terms.

²⁰At *Rhet.* 1356b6, Aristotle suggests that the list of rhetorical arguments is exhausted by enthymemes and examples. The claim is to some extent problematic, for it seems in tension with Aristotle's treatment of induction (the dialectical equivalent of the example) as a kind of enthymeme (*Rhet.* 1398a33–b20). This difficulty needn't concern us here, however, for even if the example is a kind of enthymeme, it is a fundamental subspecies of rhetorical argument. See further Raphael 1974, Allen 2001, esp. Appendix B, pp. 80 ff. and Solmsen 1929 on the development and unity of the *Rhetoric*.

demonstrative ones, it is plausible to believe that the conclusions we draw from a study of the *Rhetoric* will generalise.²¹ The choice of rhetorical arguments in particular, in addition, presents significant advantages over their demonstrative and even practical counterparts.

Rhetorical arguments, unlike arguments employed in scientific demonstrations, exemplify the simplest and most common use of our ability to syllogise. For Aristotle, all humans are capable to an extent of using rhetorical and dialectical arguments:

Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic. Both have to do with matters which in a way are within the knowledge of everyone and not confined to a [sc. special] science. Hence in a way everyone has a share of both: everyone up to a certain point can criticise or propose an argument (*logos*) and defend themselves or accuse. The majority of people do this without a method, or with a familiarity arising from habit.²²

This passage suggests that every human has a share in pre-methodical rhetoric and dialectic. Even before we are taught dialectic and rhetoric as methodical arts, we are capable of engaging in rhetorical and dialectical reasoning. In other words, we are capable of proposing and criticising arguments and of accusing or defending ourselves and others.²³ This basic grasp of rhetorical and dialectical arguments is attainable by all humans, and, unlike scientific reasoning, does not require teaching. If we cannot at least criticise or propose an argument, or construe an argument in our defence, we will be unlikely to grasp scientific arguments. Thus, if we cannot follow rhetorical and dialectical arguments, we will not be amenable to the kind of *rational* persuasion which is at the origin of belief. Rather, we will only be persuadable *in a way*, for example only in so far as we can be exhorted and reproached by a speech or an argument without really following it.²⁴

²¹ *APr.* 68b9–14 quoted above. While it seems that the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Rhetoric* are part of an integrated theory, it is controversial whether the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations* are meant to be substituted or integrated in the general study proposed in *Prior Analytics*. On the relationship between the *Topics*, the *Sophistical Refutations* and the *Rhetoric* see Brunschwig 1996, on the development and unity of Aristotle's theory of argumentation see Allen 2007 and Rapp 2012, pp. 598 ff.

²² Ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐστὶν ἀντίστροφος τῇ διαλεκτικῇ· ἀμφοτέραι γὰρ περὶ τοιούτων τινῶν εἰσὶν ἃ κοινὰ τρόπον τινὰ ἀπάντων ἐστὶ γνωρίζειν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης· διὸ καὶ πάντες τρόπον τινὰ μετέχουσιν ἀμφοῖν· πάντες γὰρ μέχρι τινὸς καὶ ἐξετάζειν καὶ ὑπέχειν λόγον καὶ ἀπολογεῖσθαι καὶ κατηγορεῖν ἐγχειροῦσιν. τῶν μὲν οὖν πολλῶν οἱ μὲν εἰκῆ ταῦτα δρῶσιν, οἱ δὲ διὰ συνήθειαν ἀπὸ ἕξεως. *Rhet.* 1354a1–7. Translations of the *Rhetoric* are based, sometimes loosely, on Freese 1975.

²³ *SE* 172a20 ff., too, suggests that everyone can make pre-methodical use of refutations (*elenkoi*).

²⁴ *NE* 1102b31–1103a3. See chapter 2.3 for discussion.

Rhetorical and dialectical arguments encapsulate the most basic form of reasoning. Looking at examples of rhetorical arguments to elucidate our capacity to syllogise is, in addition, potentially more fruitful than looking at the so-called practical syllogism. This is because, first, it is not obvious whether Aristotle intended practical syllogisms to capture the actual deliberative process of a rational agent or to stand for an explanation of her deliberation *a posteriori*.²⁵ Second, Aristotle seems happy to describe the cognitive process at the basis of non-human animal purposive movement with a practical syllogism in *De Motu Animalium*.²⁶

Hence, to reconstruct what having *logos* requires, it is best to use as case studies rhetorical arguments (enthymemes and examples) as opposed to scientific demonstrations or practical syllogisms. Aristotle's methodical account of rhetorical arguments is the following:

When it is shown that something is the case on the basis of a number of similar cases, this is induction [sc. in dialectic], example [sc. in rhetoric]; When, certain propositions being true, [sc. it is shown that] a further and quite distinct proposition must also be true because they are true, whether universally or for the most part, this is called syllogism [sc. in dialectic], enthymeme [sc. in rhetoric].²⁷

Let's focus on the enthymeme first. The enthymeme is a kind of syllogism (or a syllogism of a kind)²⁸ whose premisses can express either universal truths or truths for the most part. It relies on the premisses to derive a new conclusion. But what is the relationship between the premisses and the conclusion? Enthymemes in the *Rhetoric* are usually simple deductive and explanatory arguments, expressed in a conditional form: "since one is either the slave of wealth or of chance, no one is really free"; "since educated people tend to be envied, and no one should be envied, no one should educate their children too much".²⁹ The premisses, as we can see from these

²⁵On this controversy, see e.g. Cooper 1975, pp. 46–47 and Charles 1984, p. 136.

²⁶*De Motu* 701a32–36. See Gill 1991, p. 183 ff. and Irwin 1988a, p. 324 on potential solutions to this problem.

²⁷ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ ὁμοίων δείκνυσθαι ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει ἐκεῖ μὲν ἐπαγωγὴ ἐστὶν ἐνταῦθα δὲ παράδειγμα τὸ δὲ τινῶν ὄντων ἕτερόν τι διὰ ταῦτα συμβαίνειν παρὰ ταῦτα τῶν ταῦτα εἶναι ἢ καθόλου ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ἐκεῖ μὲν συλλογισμὸς ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἐνθύμημα καλεῖται. *Rhet.* 1356b14–18.

²⁸*Rhet.* 1355a4–7. See Burnyeat 1994, p. 13 and ff. for the thesis that an enthymeme is merely a syllogism of a kind because it is not really demonstrative.

²⁹*Rhet.* 1394b1–5 and ff. There is a controversy in the literature concerning whether enthymemes are logically incomplete, invalid, or just short. Whether they are incomplete, invalid or just short, however, doesn't make much difference for my argument here. What matters is that they require the speaker to provide and the audience to grasp a universal reason to believe a certain conclusion. See Burnyeat 1994 and Burnyeat 1996 for the view that enthymemes do not meet the standards of

examples, provide a universal reason (which might apply to every case or be restricted to most cases) to think that the conclusion is true.³⁰

Since enthymemes are addressed to an audience that is not necessarily knowledgeable, their premisses have to be based on commonly accepted opinions (*endoxa*), rather than on scientific principles, or scientific universal truths. Furthermore, since the audience is not trained, rhetorical enthymemes shouldn't involve too long and complicated deductive chains.³¹ Nonetheless, the explanatory premisses in the enthymeme are universal, they draw a connection between general types. For example, they point out the connection between being human and being reliant on wealth and luck, or to the connection between being educated and being envied.³²

This analysis gives us a preliminary insight into what precisely the rhetorician and her audience have to be able to do, if they hope to be able to give a speech and understand or be persuaded by it. The rhetorician must be able to give universal reasons that support a certain conclusion, and to present them as good reasons for the conclusion. The audience doesn't have to be knowledgeable, but it does need to grasp the rhetorician's universal reasons. Thus, the "syllogising" ability of rhetoricians and their audience involves being able to grasp universal reasons and explanations that support a conclusion. Grasping this kind of reasons and explanations, therefore, is one of the distinctive abilities connected with having *logos* and being capable of rational persuasion in the *Rhetoric*.

Understanding an enthymeme, however, is not the only thing we need in order to be able to give or grasp a persuasive speech. We also need to be able to give and grasp the other kind of persuasive arguments typical of rhetorical speeches: examples. Grasping an example, however, requires cognitive skills similar to the ones involved in grasping an enthymeme. It requires the capacity to grasp universal reasons.

validity of a *syllogismos* and see Rapp 2010, sec. 6.4 and supplement for a very persuasive defence of the logical completeness of the enthymeme.

³⁰The "for the most part" restriction has to be interpreted at *Rhet.* 1394b1–5 as a plural quantifier, hence "for the most part, As are Bs" is true iff most As are Bs. If it weren't, here Aristotle would be accepting invalid syllogisms as well as invalid enthymemes. For the suggestion that the locution has to be interpreted in this way in most cases see Judson 2006, p. 84 fn. 26. Reconstructing the details of Aristotle's account of the locution "for the most part" is difficult, but what matters in this context is that for the most part premisses point to relationship between general types independently of particulars, and that they can be found in valid demonstrations (*APo.* 87b20 and *Met.* 1027a25).

³¹*Rhet.* 1357a8–a13.

³²This is true of both enthymemes from signs and from likelihood, discussed in *Rhet.* 1357a32 ff. and taken up again in *Rhet. II.* 25. Enthymemes from likelihood proceed from generalizations, enthymemes from signs either seek to establish a generalization or proceed from a generalization. See Allen 2001, pp. 23 for an account of enthymemes from signs.

Examples are similar to inductive arguments. Although examples do not necessarily proceed from a collection of particular cases to a scientific law, they point out analogies between particular cases known by the speaker and the audience. The point of emphasizing the analogy between particular cases is to produce a universal explanation from which one can prove a conclusion. To prove that Dyonisius is asking for an army because he plans to be a tyrant, one can point out that Peisistratus and Theagenes asked for an army to make themselves tyrants, and generalise that those who ask for an army plan to be tyrants. This generalization can function as a universal reason to establish the particular case we are interested in: Dyonisius'.³³

Examples can be of two different kinds: similarly to the one proving the connection between asking for an army and plotting to be a tyrant, they can be based on past historical events. They can also rely on the speaker's invention and involve illustrative analogies (*parabolai*) between universal principles or extrapolate from moral fables (*logoi*).³⁴ Aristotle cites a Socratic argument as an example of illustrative analogy. The argument starts from two general principles: the principle that "it is bad to let the many elect athletes" and that "it is bad to let the many elect ship captains". These principles are meant to support the more general principle that "it is bad to let the many elect experts". Such principle can be used as a universal explanation for the conclusion that "it is bad to let the many elect public officials".³⁵

Aristotle draws from Aesop and Stesichorus for his examples of fables used for rhetorical persuasion.³⁶ Aesop, to persuade the Samians that they shouldn't kill a rich demagogue who stole from the treasury, tells them the fable about the fox who, when asked whether she wanted to have dog-fleas removed from her wounds, answered:

They are already full of me, and they draw little blood. If you take them away, hungry ones will come and they'll draw the blood I have left.³⁷

The fox's fable is meant to persuade the Samians that if they kill the wealthy demagogue, a poor one will come and fraud them even more. It does so by supporting the general principle that rich (or satisfied) fraudsters steal less than poor (or hungry) ones.

Being able to construct and grasp examples from past historical events, analogies or fables is similar to being able to reason by induction. It involves being able to construct

³³ *Rhet.* 1357b25 ff., compare *APr.* 68b38 and ff. For the observation that examples have to pass through a generalization see also Grimaldi 1980, p. 69 and Coenen 1992.

³⁴ *Rhet.* 1393a26–28.

³⁵ *Rhet.* 1393b4–8.

³⁶ *Rhet.* 1394a6 ff.

³⁷ *Rhet.* 1393b30–35.

and grasp a generalization which can function as a universal explanation in support of a conclusion. If this is right, grasping examples, just as grasping enthymemes, requires the ability to grasp universal explanatory reasons.

This analysis of examples and enthymemes gives us some insight into what kind of abilities having *logos* requires, at least in the case where *logos* is related to persuasion, conviction and the formation of beliefs. Persuasion and conviction are required for the formation of beliefs, and animals cannot be persuaded because they lack *logos*. Hence, *logos* here seems to be something like a capacity, perhaps the capacity to speak, or the capacity to reason. By looking at the *Rhetoric*, we can clarify the relationship between this capacity and persuasion further. Persuasion is brought about by means of arguments or discourses (*logoi*). In order to grasp the most basic kind of arguments, i.e. enthymemes and examples, we must be able to grasp universal reasons.

A study of the *Rhetoric* suggests that having *logos* strictly speaking requires the ability to grasp universal reasons or explanations. Thinking, in so far as it marches in step with the possession of *logos*, requires this very same ability. This analysis shows a preliminary connection between having *logos* and being capable of understanding and constructing certain types of inferences: inferences that rely on universal explanatory reasons. The connection between having *logos* and the ability to understand and construct inferences has been noticed by many interpreters.³⁸ However, a study of the *Rhetoric* shows that this ability is more sophisticated than we might have initially thought. Even grasping the most basic rhetorical arguments requires the ability to grasp universal explanations. If, for Aristotle, the inferences that characterise the possession of *logos* are those that rely on universal explanatory reasons, there seems to be room for lower-level inferences to lie below the threshold of *logos*.³⁹ These may include basic means-end inferences, as well as inferences that rely on the grasp of particular causal relationships, including for-the-sake-of relationships.⁴⁰ In the context of Aristotle's theory of animal cognition it is not surprising that lower level inferences might lie under the threshold of *logos*. After all, non-human animals lack *logos*, but are capable of purposive behaviour and, arguably, of working out the means to achieve

³⁸See *inter alia* Irwin 1988a, pp. 322 ff. Lorenz 2006, pp. 177 ff. and Sorabji 1993, p. 88.

³⁹See Sorabji 1993, p. 88.

⁴⁰*Contra* Lorenz 2006, pp. 177 ff. At *EE* 1226b21–30, animals and children are said to lack an opinion about the why (*hupolēpsis tou dia ti*). However, the passage may be interpreted as suggesting that animals and children are incapable of assessing and choosing between different means to achieve a set goal as adult humans do. It needn't imply that non-rational beings lack any access to the recognition of means to set ends.

their set ends.⁴¹

1.3 Just Below *Logos*: Perception and Experience

In the previous section, I focused on the relationship between having *logos* and forming a belief in order to elucidate what having *logos* requires. This account needs to be supplemented with an analysis of the abilities and states that lie at the threshold of a creature's possession of *logos*: perception and experience.⁴² After all, Aristotle presumably envisaged a number of thinking activities which involve *logos*, but do not necessarily require rational persuasion. These might include engaging in rational contemplation, or simply entertaining thoughts.⁴³ Perception and experience do not require the possession of *logos*, for non-human animals have a share in them too.⁴⁴ Yet, they are highly sophisticated, and they even involve some grasp of universals.⁴⁵ Hence, perception and experience might seem hardly distinguishable from instances of thought that do not require rational persuasion, and yet require *logos*.

A promising way to study the cognitive limits of perception and experience is to look at their grasp of universals. Let's start from the possibility to grasp universals perceptually. In the *Posterior Analytics*, universals are described as impossible to perceive, even though perception can be "of universals".⁴⁶ The thesis that it is impossible to perceive universals has been taken to suggest that perception is blind to general types like "man", or "red", and it can only grasp particulars like "this coloured patch", "this regularly shaped object".⁴⁷

We have, however, good reasons to believe that the claim that perception can't grasp universals doesn't amount to the claim that perception cannot grasp general types.⁴⁸ To begin with, perceptual grasp of general types is at the basis of Aristotle's explanation of how we acquire knowledge by induction.⁴⁹ Perception doesn't simply trigger the thought of Forms or of universals already "stored in the soul". Rather,

⁴¹See e.g. the non-human animal practical syllogism at *De Motu* 701a30 ff. and the numerous clever hunting and curative strategies attributed to non-human animals at *HA* 611b32 ff.

⁴²*Phantasia* is another capacity that arguably lies at the threshold of the possession of *logos*. Here I don't analyse it separately because I take its cognitive content to derive from perception (*DA* 429a1–5), and hence not to be more sophisticated than perception's. I follow *inter alia* Caston 2014 *contra* Nussbaum 1978, essay 5 and Kahn 1992, Section IV (see below).

⁴³See e.g. *noein* in *DA* 427b15, *DA* 430b27 ff., or in general Aristotle's discussions of *theoria*.

⁴⁴See *inter alia* *DA* 427b6–11 for perception and *Met.* 980b25–27 for experience.

⁴⁵*APo.* 87b29 and *APo.* 100a15–b5.

⁴⁶*APo.* 87b29 and *APo.* 100a15–b5.

⁴⁷See in particular Kahn 1992, Section IV.

⁴⁸See Caston 2014 and Sorabji 1993, pp. 30 ff. to which my discussion of these issues is indebted.

⁴⁹See *Metaphysics I* and *Posterior Analytics II*. 19.

universals are “instilled” in the soul by perception precisely because perception is already “of the universal”:

When one of the undifferentiated items makes a stand, there is a primitive universal in the soul (for you perceive the particular, but perception is of the universal, e.g. of man, not of Callias, a man). ... For it is plain that we must get to know the primitives by induction, for this is how perception instils the universal.⁵⁰

Here, Aristotle writes that perception can be “of universals” in so far as it can grasp general types like “man” that are instantiated in particulars like “Callias”. Hence, he grants that perception can grasp general types, and indicates this possibility by pointing to the fact that perception is “of universals”.

Some might object that we should not generalise from the claim that perception can be of general types like “man” to the claim that we can grasp general types perceptually. In *DA* 418a7–25 and *DA* 428b18–29, Aristotle distinguishes between perception of proper (*idia*) perceptibles like colours, sounds and flavours, common (*koina*) perceptibles like motion, rest, number, shape and size and incidental (*kata sumbebēkos*) perceptibles, such as the perception that “this is Diare’s son”. General types like “man” belong to the category of incidental perceptibles. They are neither specific to one of the five senses like colours and flavours nor do they belong to the categories of motion, rest, number, size and shape. Even if incidental perception is of general types, general types might not strictly speaking be grasped perceptually. Incidental perception, unlike common perception and proper perception, might require the aid of other faculties, for example thought or *phantasia*, in order to grasp its objects.⁵¹

This objection, however, does not undermine the view that perception can grasp general types. Even though in this passage of the *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle employs a case of incidental perception in order to explain that perception can be “of universals”, it is implausible to think that only incidental perception can grasp general types. Plenty of textual evidence supports the view that perception of proper perceptibles and common perceptibles can discriminate general types too. In the *Metaphysics*,

⁵⁰σπάντος γὰρ τῶν ἀδιαφόρων ἑνός, πρῶτον μὲν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καθόλου (καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον, ἡ δ’ αἴσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν, οἷον ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλ’ οὐ Καλλίου ἀνθρώπου). ... δῆλον δὲ ὅτι ἡμῖν τὰ πρῶτα ἐπαγωγῆ γινώσκειν ἀναγκαῖον· καὶ γὰρ ἡ αἴσθησις οὕτω τὸ καθόλου ἐμποιεῖ. *APo.* 100a15–b5. Translations of the *Posterior Analytics* are based on Barnes 1993.

⁵¹For this view, see for example Kahn 1992. For an argument against this interpretation see chapter 2.2.

proper perception is said to be able to grasp fire as hot.⁵² In *De Anima*, proper perception can discriminate colour types such as “white”.⁵³ In *On Dreams*, common perception can discriminate through touch the difference between one movement and two movements.⁵⁴ Hence, we have reason to believe that common and proper perception, as well as incidental perception, can discriminate general types.

Furthermore, for Aristotle although perception is “of the universal” and can grasp general types, there still is a sense in which we cannot perceive universals. Thus, there is an important difference between the locution “perception of x” (*aisthēsis* plus genitive) and the locution “perceiving x” (*aisthanesthai* plus accusative).⁵⁵ At *APo.* 87b28–35, Aristotle writes that:

Even though perception is of what is such and such, and not of what is a this so-and-so, nevertheless what you perceive must be a this so-and-so at a place and at a time. It is impossible to perceive what is universal and holds in every case.⁵⁶

⁵²*Met.* 981b10–12.

⁵³*DA* 418a7–25, *DA* 428b18–29.

⁵⁴*Insomn.* 461b1 and ff. On the view that proper and common perception can grasp general types see Sorabji 1993, pp. 17–20. On the view that the objects of incidental perception can be perceptually grasped see Cashdollar 1973, pp. 158 ff, Modrak 1987, p. 70 ff. Everson 1997, Ch. 5. See also Caston 2014. For a study of the metaphysical theory Aristotle relies on to ground his claim that the content of perception is complex and includes objects as well as common perceptibles see Gregoric 2007 and Marmodoro 2014.

⁵⁵For this distinction see Caston 2014. Note that Aristotle, somewhat confusingly, uses the locution *perception of the universal* to refer to a universal explanatory account, as opposed to a general type, in a related passage of the *Posterior Analytics*:

If we were on the moon and saw the earth screening it, we would not know the cause of the eclipse. We would perceive that it is now eclipsed but not generally why, for there is no perception of the universal.

διὸ καὶ εἰ ἐπὶ τῆς σελήνης ὄντες ἐρωῶμεν ἀντιφράττουσαν τὴν γῆν, οὐκ ἂν ᾔδειμεν τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ἐκλείψεως. ἡσθάνομεθα γὰρ ἂν ὅτι νῦν ἐκλείπει, καὶ οὐ διότι ὅλως· οὐ γὰρ ἦν τοῦ καθόλου αἴσθησις. *APo.* 87b40–88a2.

From the context, however, we can extrapolate that he is talking about universal explanatory accounts and he is not contradicting the view that perception can be of universals in so far as it can grasp general types as properties of particulars. Further proof that Aristotle is not denying, in this passage, that we can perceive general types as properties of particulars is that here he writes that we can perceive the moon as having the property of being eclipsed.

⁵⁶εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἔστιν ἡ αἴσθησις τοῦ τοιοῦδε καὶ μὴ τοῦδὲ τινος, ἀλλ’ αἰσθάνεσθαι γε ἀναγκαῖον τότε τι καὶ πού καὶ νῦν. τὸ δὲ καθόλου καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἀδύνατον αἰσθάνεσθαι. *APo.* 87b28–35. Scott 1995, p. 152 proposes a different analysis of this passage in connection to *APo.* 100a15–b5. He argues that the point of the passage is to contrast perception as a faculty with single instances of the activity of perception, and to suggest that the faculty of perception is best characterised as having universals as its objects (and not particulars), while single tokens of perceptual activity are always particular-involving. Even if his interpretation of these passages were right, the point would remain that Aristotle seems to allow us to perceive general types as properties of particulars in his psychological works, while he denies here that we can perceive generalizations.

Here the technical terms for “particular” (this so-and-so, or *tode ti*) and “particular token belonging to a general type” (this such-and-such, or *tode toionde*) are used to make an important distinction. Even if perception can be of a token belonging to a type *as* belonging to the type, perception will always be tied to the particular present here and now. Not only will perception require the presence of a particular in order to be triggered, but the particular will always feature in its content. This explains why it is possible to perceive general types but impossible to perceive what is universal and *holds in every case*. We can, for example, see this *a* as *W*, or see that this *a* is *W*, where “*W*” is a general type and “*a*” is a particular object. Hence, general types can feature in our perceptual representations, and perception can be *of* the universal. However, general types cannot feature in our perceptual representations *on their own*, which is why we can’t *perceive universals*. We cannot perceive the general type “white” (*W*) on its own, i.e. without representing an individual or a particular as white. Similarly, we cannot perceive a general type *as* another general type. For example, we can’t perceive “swan” (*S*) as “white” (*W*), where *S* and *W* are not a particular animal present here and now but are general types or categories.⁵⁷

Aristotle’s use of the term “universal” (τὸ καθόλου) is notoriously ambiguous between general types and universally quantified propositions in the *Posterior Analytics*.⁵⁸ Here, however, the ambiguity is not problematic. When Aristotle writes that we cannot perceive universals, what he means is that we cannot perceive general types unless we perceive them as properties of a particular, or of an individual. Hence, derivatively, universally quantified propositions, or generalizations, cannot report the content of our perceptions. Generalizations are such precisely because they exclude reference to a particular individual. Thus, a proposition *P* that reports the content of perception could be of the form:

“This is a swan (*S*) and it is white (*W*)”

However, it couldn’t be of the form:

“For all *x*s, if *x* is *S* then it is *W*”

If this is correct, perception is blind to generalizations, but it can grasp general types as properties of particulars. This analysis suggests that at least some basic perceptual discrimination of general types as properties of particulars is possible: we

⁵⁷See Caston 2014 and *Met.* 1060b19 and *Met.* 1033b22–4 for the contrast between general type (*tode toionde*) and particular (*tode ti*). Barnes 1993, p. 193 ff. notices the difference between perceiving universals and having perception of universals, but considers the difference between the two “tenuous”.

⁵⁸Barnes 1993 p. 193 and pp. 259 ff, *APo. I.* 31 and *APo. II.* 19.

can perceptually take something to be a swan, even though we are unable to grasp the concept “swan” perceptually and even if we lack a concept of “swan”.⁵⁹ The view that perceptual content can include general types while being non-conceptual in this way is confirmed by Aristotle’s view concerning the possibility of perceiving the essence of flesh:

It is with the faculty of sense that we discern hot and cold and the qualities of which flesh is a proportion (*logos tis*). But it is with another faculty, either separate from sense, or related to it as the bent line when it is straightened out is related to its former self, that we discriminate the essence of flesh (*to sarki einai*).⁶⁰

From this passage, we learn that while we can perceive the qualities of flesh (texture, temperature), we can’t perceive its essence, or flesh’s “being”. For that, we need thought.⁶¹

Since we can perceive universals as properties of particulars, we should be able to perceive a particular token of flesh, like this arm or that leg, as flesh. However, we can’t perceive the essence or the being of flesh. As Terence Irwin suggested, this might happen because perception can recognise particular instances of flesh, but it is unable to disentangle the features that are essential to flesh from the ones that generally accompany particular instances of flesh. On this view, having a concept of F requires one to grasp certain features as reasons for calling something F, and perception is insufficient to achieve this kind of inferential grasp.⁶² Another possibility would be that having a concept of F requires the ability to recombine it syntactically and to draw analogies and differences between F and other concepts. While perception can recognise x as F, it cannot engage in this kind syntactical recombination.⁶³ It is hard to tease out the precise account of concepts endorsed by Aristotle. However, his account of the recognitional powers of perception suggests that perception enables us to have at least a low-level recognition of general types as properties of particulars. A more sophisticated grasp of general types (syntactical or inferential) is however beyond the cognitive limits of perception.

⁵⁹Caston 2014, pp. 26 ff. and Sorabji 1993, pp. 30 ff.

⁶⁰τῷ μὲν οὖν αἰσθητικῷ τὸ θερμὸν καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν κρίνει, καὶ ὡς λόγος τις ἢ σάρξ· ἄλλω δέ, ἥτοι χωριστῷ ἢ ὡς ἡ κεκλασμένη ἔχει πρὸς αὐτὴν ὅταν ἐκταθῆ, τὸ σαρκὶ εἶναι κρίνει. *DA* 429b15–17.

⁶¹*Nous* is implied by Aristotle’s description of ἄλλω as something either separable from perception or related to it as the bent line when it is straightened out. See Hicks 1907, pp. 486–488 and Polansky 2007 pp. 447 ff.

⁶²See further Irwin 1988a, p. 321 and Gill 1991, p. 189.

⁶³Caston 2014, drawing on Speaks 2005, Peacocke 2001, Evans 1982, McDowell 1994 *et alt.*

This account of our perceptual grasp of universals suggests that at least a basic perceptual recognition of general types as properties of particulars lies below the threshold of *logos*. It suggests, in addition, that having concepts and grasping generalizations might require *logos*. This discussion, however, needs to be supported by an account of experience (*empeiria*). Experience is a cognitive state which requires the cooperation of different cognitive capacities, including perception and memory.⁶⁴ For this reason, it might go beyond the limits of perception. Nonetheless, experience seems to lie below the possession of *logos*, for some non-rational animals have a little experience.⁶⁵ If turns out, then, that experience allows us and the other animals to grasp generalizations and concepts, these abilities cannot be part of what possessing *logos* amounts to. As I argue in what follows, there is no compelling evidence that experience on its own possesses concepts. However, there is some evidence that suggests that experience enables us to grasp generalizations.

The thesis that experience is non-rational has been contested by many commentators, from Alexander of Aphrodisias onwards.⁶⁶ One reason to think that experience is rational is that Aristotle claims in the *Metaphysics* that certain thoughts (*ennoēmata*) and convictions (*hupolēpseis*) are a matter of experience. In addition, there is the suggestion in the *Posterior Analytics* that experience has to be equated with a whole universal (either a concept or an explanatory account) that comes to rest in the soul once we have accumulated enough memories.⁶⁷

Nonetheless, the case for experience lying below the threshold of *logos* seems to me compelling. Aristotle does say that non-human animals have little of it (*Met.* 980b26–27), and this remark is difficult to explain away. On the contrary, the fact that experience generates convictions and thoughts in animals which have *logos* doesn't require experience itself to be rational strictly speaking. After all, while perception is non-rational, perceptual evidence can be at the basis of strictly speaking rational thoughts and beliefs in beings who possess *logos*. Similarly, it is possible to interpret the *Posterior Analytics* as suggesting that the universal accounts (or concepts) at the origin of craft and science that experience instils in the soul are not, themselves, part of the state of experience, but are generated by experience.⁶⁸

⁶⁴*Met.* 980b25 ff. and *APo.* 100a3 ff.

⁶⁵*Met.* 980b26–27.

⁶⁶See Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 4.15. For some contemporary examples see Butler 2003, LaBarge 2006. For an attempt to bridge the gap between the rational and non-rational side of experience, see Gregoric and Grgic 2006.

⁶⁷*APo.* 100b5–8.

⁶⁸This merely requires us to translate *APo.* 100b5–8 as follows, without taking the ῥῆ as epexegetic:

From experience *or* from all the universal that comes to rest in the soul, the one from

Hence, experience is non-rational and non-conceptual. Much like perception, it might aid the formation of concepts without being itself conceptual. In addition, the thesis that experience is non-rational fits well with Aristotle's thesis that experience does not involve a grasp of universal causal accounts. Experience does not enable us to grasp the explanatory accounts that are at the basis of rational beliefs. In the *Metaphysics*, experience might give us the "that" (*to hoti*), but unlike craft it doesn't give us the "why" (*to dioti*).⁶⁹ Precisely for this reason, merely experienced people cannot teach. They cannot explain why, for example, they have treated a certain patient with a certain medicine by referring to a universal explanatory account.⁷⁰

Although it seems evident that experience cannot grasp universal explanatory accounts, it might seem less obvious that it is unable to grasp general types independently of particulars. This is because experience is supposed to be a good guide for practice, perhaps even a better guide than craft. Experienced doctors are able to see the similarity between different patients they have observed, and to use their awareness of the similarity between patients to choose the right therapy for a new patient.⁷¹ Arguably, this ability requires the ability to generalise, or the ability to grasp general types on their own: we can use our experience of the past to guide our present and future actions only once we have extrapolated a general rule from the cases observed.⁷²

In the *Metaphysics*, however, Aristotle can be taken to imply that experience can generalise and grasp general types independently of particulars:

Craft comes to be when from many notions (*ennoēmata*) a single universal conviction (*hupolēpsis*) arises about similar cases. It is a matter of experience to have the conviction that when Callias was ill of this disease this helped, and so for Socrates and many others taken individually (*kath' hekaston*). But [sc. to judge] that something helps all those of such a sort grouped under a single category, when suffering of this disease, e.g.

many, whatever is one and the same in all these items, there comes a principle of craft or science.

ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἐνός παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης.

See also Charles 2000, p. 155 and Bronstein 2012.

⁶⁹*Met.* 981a28–30.

⁷⁰*Met.* 981b5–10. See Plato's *Laws* 720a6 ff., *Laws* 857c6 ff., *Grg.* 465a2, for the connection between these passages and experience in the *Metaphysics I* see also Moss 2014, pp. 205 ff.

⁷¹*Met.* 981a15–20.

⁷²See Gregoric and Grgic 2006, p. 15 ff. for the view that experience must provide us with the grasp of generalisations. The same point seems to me implicit in Everson 1997, p. 224, p. 227 fn. 84. Compare with Charles 2000, p. 151 ff. according to whom experience is unable to generalise.

flegmatic or bilious people when feverish, [sc. is a matter of] craft. ...

Experience is grasp (*gnōsis*) of particulars, craft of universals.⁷³

Experience allows us to compare particular cases, like the one of Callias and Socrates and many others taken individually, and to look at the analogies between them. Thus, it allows us compare particulars and to see the similarities between the general properties they have. However, it does not allow us to grasp the generalizations characteristic of craft. It is impossible to grasp via experience that, say, “Valerian herbs cure flegmatic people from fever”.

There seems no reason to deny that experience or even perception could be able to recognise the general types “valerian”, “flegmatic” and “fever” as belonging to a particular individual. If perception can be “of” general types and incidental perceptibles, it seems plausible to believe that the perceptual range can be expanded to include sophisticated properties such as “being feverish”, or “being a curative herb”.⁷⁴ Aristotle’s view that experience cannot grasp generalizations such as “Valerian herbs cure flegmatic people from fever” might therefore suggest that experience, just as perception, is blind to generalizations.⁷⁵ However, the evidence we have is not conclusive. After all, Aristotle’s point might simply be that experience does not grasp the explanatory accounts typical of craft, but can grasp other generalizations. For example, it might be able to grasp that valerian herbs cure feverish people, without being able to grasp why (and in which cases) valerian herbs are curative.⁷⁶

We can now take stock, and draw together the results from this account of *logos*, inferential reasoning, perception and experience. We cannot conclusively show whether

⁷³γίγνεται δὲ τέχνη ὅταν ἐκ πολλῶν τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἐννοημάτων μία καθόλου γένηται περὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ὑπόληψις. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔχειν ὑπόληψιν ὅτι Καλλιὰ κάμνοντι τηροῖ τὴν νόσον τοῖς συνήνεγκε καὶ Σωκράτει καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον οὕτω πολλοῖς, ἐμπειρίας ἐστίν· τὸ δ’ ὅτι πᾶσι τοῖς τοιοῖσδε κατ’ εἶδος ἐν ἀφορισθεῖσι, κάμνουσι τηροῖ τὴν νόσον, συνήνεγκεν, ὅσον τοῖς φλεγματώδεσιν ἢ χολώδεσι [ἢ] πυρέττουσι καύσῳ, τέχνης. ... ἢ μὲν ἐμπειρία τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστόν ἐστι γνῶσις ἢ δὲ τέχνη τῶν καθόλου ... *Met.* 981a5–15. Translations of the *Metaphysics* are loosely based on W. D. Ross 1924. See above for the suggestion that the fact that *empeiria* generates notions (*ennoēmata*) and convictions (*hupolēpseis*) does not entail that *empeiria* is a rational state. I translate *gnōsis* with grasp to signal that it can be non-rational, for similar uses see *APo.* 99b38, *GA* 731a33, *Protrepticus* 76.2.

⁷⁴Note that at *Met.* 981a5–15 (quoted above) Aristotle does not deny that experience is “of” universals, he just emphasizes that it is of particulars.

⁷⁵These considerations, in addition, might be used to explain further Aristotle’s claim that people with experience cannot teach (*Met.* 981b5–10). Not only would experienced people be unable to teach because they lack understanding of universal causes, but also because they do not grasp generalizations. They would be able to notice similarities between their memory of particular past cases and present cases, but they would be unable to extrapolate from these particular comparisons. This would explain why they can’t convey their grasp of similarities to someone who lacks access to their very same collection of memories.

⁷⁶See also Sorabji 1993, p. 34.

or not the ability to grasp generalizations lies above the threshold of *logos* because non-rational experience, unlike perception, might be able to generalise. However, a study of experience, perception and rhetorical persuasion can clarify many aspects of what possessing *logos* strictly speaking involves. Having *logos* strictly speaking involves grasping universal explanatory accounts. This kind of grasp is required to engage in rational persuasion and to go beyond mere non-rational experience. Having *logos* strictly speaking also requires having concepts. Even if one lacks *logos*, however, one can have perceptual recognition of general types as properties of particulars. In addition, without *logos* one can presumably grasp and engage in some low-level form of inferences, including for example basic means-end inferences.⁷⁷

1.4 Conclusion: Returning to the *Ethics*

I argued that a study of *De Anima*, the *Rhetoric*, the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Metaphysics* can clarify what it means for the rational part of the soul to have *logos* strictly speaking. Having *logos*, when it is connected to the ability to think, means having concepts and also having the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts. The non-rational part lacks precisely these abilities, and the rational part possesses them.

It is easy to square the suggestion that the non-rational part is perceptual with the suggestion that it lacks *logos* strictly speaking: the non-rational part, like perception, lacks concepts and it cannot grasp universal explanatory accounts. But what about the non-rational part's and the rational part's desiderative sides? Giving an account of the desiderative sides of our parts of the soul is difficult because it requires us to understand Aristotle's taxonomy of desires. The taxonomy involves a tripartite distinction between *epithumia* (appetite for the pleasant), *boulēsis* (wish for the good) and *thumos* (spirited desire, or desire for retaliation).⁷⁸ It also involves the distinction between rational desire (*logistikē orexis*) and non-rational desire (*alogon orexis*): appetites and spirited desires are non-rational, and wishes and decisions (*prohairesis*) are rational.⁷⁹ In light

⁷⁷ *Contra* Lorenz 2006, p. 175 ff.

⁷⁸ *Rhet.* 1369a3–4, *Rhet.* 1370a16–17, *NE* 1149a30–34. The characterization of *thumos* is especially controversial, for the view that it is for retaliation see G. Pearson 2012, ch. 5, for the view that *thumos* is for the fine (*to kalon*) see *inter alia* Cooper 1998b. *Prohairesis* is a difficult case, it is a rational desire which might be included or not under the rubric of wish (see e.g. *NE* 1111b19–26 and *NE* 1113a11).

⁷⁹ See e.g. *DA* 432b4–7, *Rhet.* 1369a3–4, *EE* 1225b25–26, and *NE* 1113a11 on the idea that *prohairesis* is rational too in so far as it is deliberative (*bouleutikē*). There is only one isolated exception to this classification. At *Pol.* 1334b17–25, Aristotle attributes wish to the non-rational part of the soul.

of this taxonomy, we can take the non-rational soul to be the seat of non-rational desires (appetites and spirited desires) and the rational soul to be the seat of rational desires (wishes and decisions).

Though Aristotle never gives a full definition of rational desire, we can extrapolate at least a necessary condition for rational desires: all rational desires are necessarily based on intellectual evaluative cognition.⁸⁰ Both the *Rhetoric* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* emphasize the necessary connection between wishes and thought, and in particular between wishes and thoughts about goodness and excellence.⁸¹ We cannot wish for something unless we think it is good or excellent. If thoughts about goodness and excellence are necessary for wishes, then they are necessary for decisions too. Decisions are the result of deliberation about what we think good, as opposed to merely pleasant or painful.⁸²

Being based on an intellectual evaluative cognition is necessary but not sufficient for a desire to count as rational. Some non-rational appetitive desires will be based on or provoked by our thoughts and inferences about the pleasant, and thereby depend on rational evaluative cognition.⁸³ For this reason, the division between rational and non-rational desires does not map onto the division between rational and non-rational cognition.

Perhaps, then, we can specify some further conditions that the thoughts at the basis of rational desires have to meet. They might be thoughts about the good instead of the pleasant, and they might require explanatory inferences instead of mere means-ends reasoning. Aristotle's view might be that we need a concept of the human good to form rational desires, or that we need to reflect on explanatory accounts of the human good in order to form rational desires. He might hold one of these two views, or a combination of them.⁸⁴

⁸⁰For a detailed discussion, see G. Pearson 2012, ch. 7, to which my account here is indebted.

⁸¹*Rhet.* 1269a2–4 and *NE* 1136b7–9.

⁸²See *NE* 1111b16–34, *NE* 1112a1–10, *NE* 1113a11, *DA* 434a5–10. For further discussion see chapter 4.3.

⁸³*NE* 1149a32–b1. See also Moss 2012, ch. 1 to 4 for the view that non-rational motivation is based on non-rational cognition, and especially see ch. 4 for how this view can accommodate Aristotle's suggestion that some non-rational emotions and desires spring from rational cognition. See also Cooper 1989 for the thesis that rational desires, unlike non-rational ones, are the result of one's reflection about what is to be done.

⁸⁴A full discussion of the vast literature on the rationality of desire lies outside the scope of this work. See G. Pearson 2012, ch. 7 for the thesis that it is for specifically human goods, see Irwin 1975 and Cooper 1998b for the thesis that it is reasoned, see Moss 2012, pp. 223 ff. and Tuozzo 1994 for the view that thought does not supply wish with content, but merely conceptualises the content supplied by perception or *phantasia*. See further Grönroos 2015 for the view that the motivational force of wish is in-built in human nature and comes neither from rational nor from non-rational cognition.

It is hard to come to a full account of the division between rational and non-rational desires on the basis of the evidence we have. However, we are in the position to spell out some of the features of desiderative side of our non-rational and rational parts of the soul. The non-rational part of the soul is the seat of desires that do not require, for their formation, the possession of concepts and the ability to grasp universal explanatory accounts.⁸⁵ It is also the seat of some desires that are formed on the basis of reasoning, but these desires are in some way different from rational desires. Either they are formed on the basis of a lower level kind of inferential reasoning, or they do not require a grasp of the concept of goodness, or they are not for specifically human goals. The rational part of the soul is the seat of desires which are both based on rational cognition and also meet some further condition: perhaps their formation requires the possession of a concept of goodness, or drawing explanatory inferences about goodness, or having specifically human goals.

If my discussion in this chapter is correct, it can shed light on the way in which the rational part has *logos* strictly speaking. It can also (to some extent) clarify the way in which the rational part is the seat of rational desires, and the non-rational part is the seat of non-rational desires. Even if it can shed light on what it means for a part of the soul to lack or have *logos*, my argumentative strategy might be thought to face an objection. In order to determine what having *logos* amounts to, I relied on Aristotle's distinction between cognitive states and faculties which are shared between humans and non-human animals and cognitive states and faculties which are not. Hence, in my account, the non-rational part of the human soul is cognitively very similar to the perceptual and desiderative part of the soul of non-human animals.⁸⁶ As William Fortenbaugh has pointed out, Aristotle excludes the nutritive part of the soul from the topics that concern the ethicist and the political scientist on the grounds that such part is not specifically human.⁸⁷ If my account of the non-rational part of the human soul is correct, the same considerations would count for its exclusion too.

However, the view that ethicists and political scientists should look at parts of the soul which belong only to humans generates problems for each and every part of the soul. Aristotle argues that the rational part is shared between humans and gods.

⁸⁵As far as I can tell, it is hard to imagine how for Aristotle a concept-lacking being could form a wish for the good or a decision.

⁸⁶See also Whiting 2002a.

⁸⁷Fortenbaugh 1975, pp. 26–31. See also Fortenbaugh 2006c, p. 122 ff. In both works, Fortenbaugh argues that the non-rational part is above the threshold of *logos*. As evidence he cites in particular *NE* 1102b4–13 and *EE* 1219b38–39.

Human thought or the human “thinking part” (*nous*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics X* are “divine”, and living a contemplative life makes one in some sense “godlike”.⁸⁸

We might think, therefore, that Aristotle himself didn’t give too much weight to the thesis that for the purposes of ethics one should study only those parts of the soul which are peculiar to humans.⁸⁹ After all, if he contradicts it in the case of the rational part, why should he be more careful in the case of the non-rational part? Or, and perhaps more charitably, we might try to reconcile the tension between the thesis that the rational and non-rational part of the soul are peculiar to humans and the thesis that they are shared between humans and other beings. Aristotle could coherently hold them if the non-rational part and the rational part were at the same time:

1. Similar enough in humans and animals (or humans and gods) to be shared between them.
2. Different enough when they belong to humans to deserve to be called “peculiarly” human.

Providing a full-fledged version of this interpretation is, in a way, one of the aims of this thesis as a whole. In order to give an account of the cognitive theory at the basis of Aristotle’s ethics, one needs to look both at Aristotle’s account of cognition in general and at the distinctive features of human cognition. After all, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is addressed to a peculiar kind of being, the rational animal, which has a lot in common with other beings: beasts and gods. In light of this, it is reasonable to expect the psychology at the basis of the ethics to be to some extent general, and to some extent specific to humans. In this chapter, I started from a general account of the distinction between having *logos* strictly speaking and lacking *logos*. In chapter 2, I look at some of the peculiar features of human cognition. I argue that in virtue of these peculiar features the rational and non-rational parts of the human soul can communicate. In chapter 5, I argue that the human non-rational part is special because it can be trained. In chapter 6, I argue that human practical thought has to achieve a distinctive type of rational excellence: practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is not an excellence of divine thought, for divine thought does not aim at action.⁹⁰ Together, these arguments show that Aristotle can coherently hold the thesis that the rational part and the non-rational part are at the same time shared between humans, animals and gods and “peculiar to humans”.

⁸⁸*NE* 1177b17–1178a8.

⁸⁹From now on, I will refer for ease of exposition to the non-rational perceptual and desiderative part as the non-rational part.

⁹⁰On this point see also Sorabji 1993, pp. 69–70.

Chapter 2

Listening to the Rational Part

2.1 Introduction

Even though the non-rational part of the human soul lacks *logos* strictly speaking, it has a share in *logos* in so far as it can listen to it and to the rational part.¹ In this chapter, I look at what makes the rational and non-rational parts of a human soul peculiarly human, and at what enables them to communicate. I argue that these two questions are connected: our non-rational part can listen and our rational part can make itself heard thanks to their peculiarly human characteristics.

In the first section, I argue that the non-rational part is *peculiar* because its discriminative range is expanded in virtue of its cohabitation with thought. The expanded discriminative range of the non-rational part explains why communication between parts of the soul is possible. However, it does not explain how the communication between parts can achieve the perfect harmony typical of virtuous souls. In the second section, I argue that humans can improve the communication between the two parts in light of another peculiar characteristic of their cognitive make-up: the fact that their attention can be appropriately narrowed.

2.2 Expanded Discriminative Range and Cognitive Insulation

The human non-rational part is cognitively limited: it lacks concepts and it does not engage in universal explanatory reasoning. However, its discriminative range is very wide and potentially expandable. Such expansion is made possible by the fact that non-rational part is capable, on its own, of having a non-conceptual grasp of general

¹NE 1102b31–35, EE 1219b38–39.

types as properties of particulars. If the non-rational part can grasp particulars as having general properties, it is plausible to think that the range of properties it can discriminate varies depending on its cognitive make-up.

We find extensive textual evidence that the cooperation between perception and cognitive faculties below the threshold of *logos* can significantly expand the non-rational part's discriminative range even in non-human animals. In the opening lines of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that every animal has perception, and only some have memory. Those who have memory are more apt to learning (*mathētikōtera*) and can gain a little experience (*empeiria*).² Gaining experience and learning involve, among other things, being able to discriminate a wider range of properties.

The fact that experience and memory allow some non-human animals to have access to a wider discriminative range is confirmed by Aristotle's studies on non-human animal behaviour. All animals live by perception,³ but some animals have a wider perceptual range than others. Bees can recognise honey from its smell, some horses discriminate between horses they already fought and horses they did not fight yet, goats and dogs recognise curative herbs and eat them when needed, cranes recognise signs of bad weather.⁴ Some animals can even perceptually discriminate differences in articulated sounds:

Some [sc. animals] can also give and receive instructions, some to each other, some from humans, in so far as they have a share in hearing not only sounds, but also in distinguishing perceptually (*diaisthanetai*) the difference between signals (*sēmeiōn*).⁵

Memory and experience can expand the recognitional capacities of a non-rational animal. In some cases, they can even go as far as rendering the animal capable of recognising perceptually different signals (*sēmeia*).

The non-rational part's discriminative range can be expanded by the cooperation between different non-rational faculties and states. In addition, it can be expanded by the cooperation with the rational part. In *De Anima* and the *Parva Naturalia*, we find various examples of non-rational perceptual recognition that seems only available to

²*Met.* 980a28–b25.

³*NE* 1098a2–3.

⁴*HA* 534b14–535a13, *HA* 605a8–17, *HA* 612a3–16, *HA* 614b19–27.

⁵Ἐνια δὲ κοινωνεῖ τινὸς ἅμα καὶ μαθήσεως καὶ διδασκαλίας, τὰ μὲν παρ' ἀλλήλων, τὰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅσα περ ἀκοῆς μετέχει, μὴ μόνον ὅσα τῶν ψόφων, ἀλλ' ὅσα καὶ τῶν σημείων διαισθάνεται τὰς διαφοράς. *HA* 608a15–18. Translations of the *History of Animals* are based, sometimes loosely, on Balme 1991.

rational creatures *because* they are rational. At the very beginning of *On Perception*, there is a description of the human ability to hear speech (*logos*):

Incidentally, hearing contributes for the most part to wisdom. Speech (*logos*) is the cause of learning because it is audible, not in its own right but incidentally: for it is made of names, and every name is a symbol (*symbolon*).⁶

Speech is audible, though only incidentally, and therefore it contributes to learning. The ability to hear names and symbols, and thereby speech, is the human analogue of the animal ability to hear signals described in the previous passage. Like signals, names and symbols are neither common perceptibles nor proper perceptibles, but they can be perceived incidentally. Since non-rational animals can recognise signals perceptually, we have a reason to believe that by analogy rational animals can grasp names and symbols perceptually: the only difference seems to be that in order to perceive some sound *as a name* or *as a symbol* as opposed than just *as a signal*, the hearer must possess not only memory and experience, but also *logos* and thought. The case of hearing speech is not unique: many other cases of incidental perception, including the paradigmatic example of seeing the son of Diares, may require the perceiver to be a thinker.⁷

It might be objected that these cases of incidental perception do not show that thinking beings have a broader perceptual range. All they show is that thinking beings can draw inferences from perceptual experience. Thus, when we hear a name or a symbol we don't recognise it as such perceptually. Rather, we intellectually infer that it is a name or a symbol from our perceptual experience.⁸ But this view is, on reflection, implausible. First, it would be hard to see why Aristotle counted these cases as cases of incidental *perception* if what they in fact involve is drawing inferences from perceptual evidence. Stipulating that incidental perception is such precisely because it involves inferences from perceptual experience would not work either: since incidental perception is available to non-rational perceivers too, it cannot be defined as the kind

⁶κατὰ συμβεβηχός δὲ πρὸς φρόνησιν ἡ ἀκοὴ πλεῖστον συμβάλλεται μέρος. ὁ γὰρ λόγος αἰτιός ἐστι τῆς μαθήσεως ἀκουστός ὢν, οὐ καθ' αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηχός· ἐξ ὀνομάτων γὰρ σύγκειται, τῶν δ' ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον σύμβολόν ἐστιν. *On Perception* 437a12–15. Translations of *On Perception* are loosely based on J. Beare and G. Ross 1991. In this context, the preferred translation of *logos* seems to be speech, given that Aristotle's point is that *logos* is audible.

⁷DA 418a7–25.

⁸See e.g. Kahn 1992, pp. 367–8.

of perception that requires rational inferences.⁹

Furthermore, the idea that our non-rational discriminative range is expanded by the possession of thought and reason is not limited to incidental perception, but extends to common perception. When we see the sun as a foot wide (*podiaios*), we are perceiving a common perceptible: size (*megethos*).¹⁰ Since the foot is a technical measure unit, it can hardly be grasped by non-rational animals.¹¹ The same applies to the common perceptible number (*arithmos*). Perhaps animals can discriminate between few and many, but it is implausible to believe that discrete numbers feature in the content of their perceptions. Hence, the possession of thought renders humans capable of discriminating perceptually properties that the other animals cannot discriminate.

These examples of peculiarly human incidental and common perception show that thought can expand the perceptual-recognitional range. In the Aristotelian Corpus, this kind of top-down influence of the rational faculties on the non-rational ones is often accompanied by a bottom-up counterpart. Not only does thought enhance human non-rational cognition, but human non-rational capacities such as sense perception or memory are more developed and discriminative for the sake of thought.

Consider for example Aristotle's reflections on why different senses are more or less sharp (*akribēs*) in different animal species. In the *Generation of Animals*, the sharpness of a sense is measured in relation to either its discriminative range or its capacity to perceive at great distances.¹² Humans are the worst amongst animals of their size at perceiving at a distance, but the best of all animals at discriminating differences.¹³ At *DA* 421a20–25, Aristotle argues that we have a sharper sense of touch, and a weaker sense of smell than the other animals.¹⁴ He then connects the view that we have the sharpest sense of touch with the view that sharpness of touch enhances intelligence. The idea seems to be that our sense of touch contributes to our

⁹Furthermore, if incidental perception were the result of inferences from perceptual evidence it would be, as Cashdollar puts it, *trivial* to posit it a separate kind of perception (Cashdollar 1973. pp 158 ff). Aristotle would use the label “incidental perception” to indicate the features of the objects we perceive that we grasp intellectually and not perceptually. But why would a third kind of perception be needed in order to clarify the idea that the objects we perceive have features we actually *don't* perceive?

¹⁰See *DA* 418a7–25 and *DA* 428b18–29 for size as a common perceptible. See *DA* 428b1 ff. and *Insomn.* 458b27–459a10 for the perceptual appearance of the sun as a foot wide.

¹¹See e.g. *Theaetetus* 147d for another technical use of the foot measure unit *podiaios*.

¹²*GA* 781a14–18.

¹³*GA* 781b17–20.

¹⁴The distinction between sharp perception as involving the ability to perceive at a great distance and sharp perception as involving the ability to discriminate many differences is not explicit in *DA* 421a20–25. But if we read this passage alongside the *Generation of Animals*, we can infer that Aristotle is talking about distance in the case of smell, and discrimination in the case of touch.

intelligence by making us especially sensitive to a wide range of perceptible features.¹⁵ Our sense of touch is especially developed for the sake of the well functioning of our rational capacities.

Having thought enables human perceivers to widen their perceptual range, and human non-rational cognition is by nature fit for enhancing and enabling thought. For this reason, it is sharper and more discriminative than non-human animal cognition. This sheds light on why Aristotle might have considered the non-rational part of the human soul special, or peculiar to humans. Just as a non-human animal's perceptual soul, our non-rational part lacks *logos* and can only have a non-conceptual grasp of general types. However, it is peculiar in so far as its range is expanded for the sake of and in virtue of its cohabitation with thought.¹⁶

As I argued in chapter 1.1 and 1.4, the non-rational part of the human soul is not merely perceptual, but also desiderative. Does Aristotle take our non-rational desiderative side to be, like our perceptual side, peculiar? By looking at some human non-rational desires, we may infer that he took them to be peculiar for the same reasons he took our perception to be peculiar. The non-rational part of a human soul is the seat of non-rational desires. Human non-rational desires, however, can be for objects that go beyond the perceptual range of non-rational animals.¹⁷

In virtue of our expanded cognitive range, we have non-rational desires whose objects cannot be grasped by non-rational beings. For example, we can have non-rational appetites for a specific brand of cigarettes, or a specific type of seasoning in food. Aristotle discusses appetites of this kind in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, suggesting that they are different in different people, and depend on the specific kinds of bodily pleasures they indulge in.¹⁸ These desires lie below the threshold of rationality, but they are peculiar to the human soul.

This discussion shows that the cohabitation with thought and *logos* renders the human non-rational soul peculiar by expanding its desiderative and cognitive range. The human non-rational soul is not thereby made rational strictly speaking: it still lacks concepts, and it cannot engage in universal explanatory reasoning.

Aristotle thinks both that our non-rational soul is peculiar in so far as it has an expanded cognitive range, and also that it is rational in a way because it can listen to *logos*.¹⁹ The non-rational part's expanded cognitive range can to some extent

¹⁵A similar point is made about sight in *Met.* 980a25–27.

¹⁶Our perceptual range can be expanded by training too, see chapter 5.5.

¹⁷See also Whiting 2002a, pp. 188 ff.

¹⁸*NE* 1118b8.

¹⁹*NE* 1102b26–29, *EE* 1219b28.

account for the communication between the two parts of the human soul. A more discriminative non-rational part is presumably more responsive to the commands of reason. The non-rational part won't be perfectly responsive to universal explanations even if its cognitive range is significantly expanded because it is not capable of engaging in universal explanatory reasoning. However, if the non-rational part is trained to discriminate between slights that are worthy of retaliation and slights that are not (say), it will be more responsive to reason's command not to react against a slight unworthy of vengeance.

Nonetheless, there are cases of miscommunication between the parts of the soul that remain hard to address, even taking into account the potential expansion of the non-rational part's cognitive range. These communicative failures are especially evident in Aristotle's account of akratic and enkratic recalcitrant desires.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the akratic's non-rational part struggles and fights against *logos*. The work the rational part has to do in order to bring the non-rational part under control is described in terms of exhortations and admonitions.²⁰ The cognitive background of desiderative conflict shows that it is not easy for rational cognition to have an impact on a specific recalcitrant desire:

The object of desire and the object of wish are either the good or the apparent good (*phainomenon agathon*). For this reason (*dio*) the pleasant is an object of desire (*orekton*): for it is an apparent good, since some people think it [sc. good], and to others it appears [sc. good] even though they do not think it so—*phantasia* and belief are not in the same part of the soul—. ²¹

In this passage, Aristotle discusses the cognitive background of a desire that goes against our rational judgements about what is good or pleasant. He argues that this desire is based on non-rational cognition (*phantasia*) of an evaluative feature (goodness). The desire persists even when rational cognition contradicts its cognitive backing, and declares the evaluative appearance that grounds it false. Hence, a non-rational desire of this sort is insulated from and unresponsive to rational cognition.

²⁰ *NE* 1102b18 ff. See chapter 6.3 for further discussion.

²¹ τὸ γὰρ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ βουλευτὸν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὀρεκτόν: φαινόμενον γὰρ τι ἀγαθόν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ δοκεῖ, τοῖς δὲ φαίνεται κἂν μὴ δοκῆ. οὐ γὰρ ἐν ταύτῳ τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ φαντασία καὶ ἡ δόξα. *EE* 1235b25–29. Cf *Rhet.* 1378a30–31 and *DA* 433b5–10. It is clear that ἀγαθόν is implied after δοκεῖ at b27, for Aristotle is emphasising a contrast between the evaluative appearances he has just mentioned.

Because of their insulation from rational cognition, recalcitrant desires like the one described here are cognitively similar to perceptual illusions.²² At *DA* 428b1 ff., Aristotle argues that believing that the sun is bigger than the earth doesn't prevent one from having a perceptual appearance (*phantasia*) of it as if it were a foot wide. The perceptual appearance of the sun as smaller than the earth persists even when we are convinced, presumably on the basis of scientific arguments, that the sun is in fact much bigger than the earth.²³

Recalcitrant desires and perceptual illusions show that the general expansion of the non-rational part's cognitive range is not enough to ensure a successful communication with the rational part. Even a highly discriminative non-rational part, e.g. one that can discriminate the size of the sun, might be resistant to reason's injunction that its specific desire or perceptual appearance rests on a mistake. In order to see how the non-rational part can be corrected and brought to listen to reason, therefore, we have to look more closely at the communication between the two parts.

2.3 Listening to the Rational Part

Explaining how the communication between parts of the soul can be perfected even in case of recalcitrant desires is especially important in the context of Aristotle's ethics. A perfected intra-psyche communication is one of the distinctive marks of self-controlled and virtuous people:

This [sc. non-rational part] as well [as the rational part] appears, as we said, to share in reason (*logos*). At any rate, in the continent person it obeys reason (*logos*); and in the temperate and the brave person it presumably listens still better to reason (*logos*), since there it agrees with reason (*logos*) on everything.²⁴

In the continent person, the non-rational part is more obedient. In the virtuous person, the non-rational part is a better listener. In fact, it is such a good listener

²²I follow Moss 2009 in drawing a parallel between these cognitive phenomena.

²³For further discussion of illusions and lucid dreams which are not modified by rational beliefs that contradict them see *Insomn.* 458b27–459a10, *Insomn.* 460b16. See also Van der Eijk 1994, p. 115. On the possibility of lucid dreams see Gallop 1990, pp. 48 ff.

²⁴λόγου δὲ καὶ τοῦτο φαίνεται μετέχειν, ὥσπερ εἵπομεν· πειθαρχεῖ γοῦν τῷ λόγῳ τὸ τοῦ ἐγκρατοῦς—ἔτι δ' ἴσως εὐηκοώτερόν ἐστι τὸ τοῦ σώφρονος καὶ ἀνδρείου· πάντα γὰρ ὁμοφωνεῖ τῷ λόγῳ. *NE* 1102b25–28. I tentatively translate *logos* with reason to indicate that when Aristotle writes that the non-rational part listens, obeys and is persuaded by *logos* he is using *logos* as a metonymy for the rational part. However, as Moss 2014 shows, it should not be assumed that the correct translation for *logos* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is reason. Nor should it be assumed that the translation conveys clear notion of what having *logos* amounts to for Aristotle.

that it agrees with the rational part on everything, they speak with the same voice (*homophōnein*). This shows that, despite its constraints, the communication between the two parts can be almost perfect. If the communication between parts can be perfected in this way, there must be principled ways in which non-rational recalcitrant desires characteristic of enkratics and akratics can be eliminated. Aristotle cannot simply rely on the expansion of the non-rational part’s cognitive range to solve the problem of communication between parts of the soul. In addition, he needs to explain what happens at the cognitive level when the two parts manage to avoid to contradict one-another. The *Nicomachean Ethics* makes very clear that training or habituating well the non-rational part fosters this state of harmony and perfect communication between the parts (see *NE* Book II 1–4 and chapter 5.5). It also suggests that certain virtuous states, like *phronēsis*, require good communication between the parts of the soul (see chapter 6.3). We struggle to find, however, an account of what it means for the non-rational part to be a better listener and for the rational part to be a better persuader: what cognitive states underlie this state of perfect or perfected communication?²⁵

Even though Aristotle doesn’t dwell on this problem, we can extrapolate the resources to solve it from his theory of cognition. The most plausible interpretation, as I show in what follows, is that the non-rational part of our soul becomes a better listener when its attention is appropriately narrowed to exclude inappropriate cognitive stimuli.²⁶

²⁵Lear 2014, esp. sections II–III raises this question, and writes that Aristotle’s moral psychology “peters out” when it comes to explaining effective communication between parts of the soul. He goes on to argue that Aristotle’s moral psychology can be filled in with the help of Freudian psychology. Note that this problem arises even for theories in which Aristotle follows Plato’s *Phileb.* 38–39 and *Tim.* 71a2–d4 in thinking communication between parts is mediated by *phantasia* (Moss 2012, ch. 4.4 and Lorenz 2006, ch. 13 and 7). On these views, thought can communicate with the non-rational part because it is always accompanied by a *phantasia* (see *inter alia* *DA* 403a3). Aristotle, however, does not think that there is a perfect correspondence between the content of a thought and the content of the accompanying *phantasia* (*Mem.* 450a1–5). Hence, it is unclear how the mediation of *phantasia* could perfect the communication between parts. Aristotle’s notion of attention I go on to describe below might be helpful in solving the problem of communication between parts even within this theoretical framework. The narrowing of perceptual attention might be at the basis of a closer correspondence between the propositional content of the thought and the perceptual or even imagistic content of the corresponding *phantasia*. Pursuing this line of interpretation, however, would take us too far afield. For related contemporary debates on the attentional link between perceptual-imagistic content and propositional content, see Campbell 1997. For further discussions on whether *phantasia* has imagistic content, see Nussbaum 1978, essay 5, pp. 221 ff. Caston 2006 and Scheiter 2012.

²⁶In Cooper 1989, pp. 32 ff. John Cooper argues that the rational part persuades the non-rational part by directing its attention. He does not argue, however, that Aristotle has a notion of attention. Analogue moral psychologies of attention can be found in the work of Aristotle’s successors. Simplicius discusses how attention can be used to counter-act irrational desires in his *Commentary on Epictetus’ Handbook*, esp. 114.50 ff. in the Dübner edition (see also Brittain and Brennan 2002, p. 92, comm. on

One obvious difficulty of this interpretation is that it relies on the notion of *attention*. We commonly call attention the selective directedness of our mental lives:²⁷ we can be aware of a wide variety of cognitive stimuli at the same time, but our awareness is selective. Sometimes a stimulus is more vividly present than others: the musical background in a bar is less salient than the voices of the people we are talking to. Often a stimulus excludes competing stimuli: we don't hear our partner calling us for dinner if we are engrossed in writing, we can't write if there is a loud ambulance rushing down the road.

Aristotle didn't isolate attention as a mental capacity or as a mental phenomenon worthy of independent theorising.²⁸ However, he discussed many aspects of the selective directedness of our mental life: the fact that some cognitive stimuli are more salient or cancel out the others; the fact that the connection with pleasure can determine which cognitive stimuli are more salient. Since he discussed several aspects of the involuntary selective directedness of our mental lives, he had a notion of attention.²⁹ If Aristotle noticed and described these cognitive phenomena, it is plausible to think that he made use of them to account for the communication between the parts of the soul.

Let us begin our survey of his discussion of attention from the treatise *On Perception and Perceptible Objects* (or, as I have been referring to it, *On Perception*). The topic at the centre of *On Perception VII* is the question whether it is possible to perceive two distinct objects simultaneously.³⁰ Aristotle thinks that simultaneous perception is possible but difficult to explain. Its possibility calls for explanation because the competition between cognitive stimuli often results in one stimulus cancelling the other:

Of two movements the stronger always tends to expel the weaker—which is why people do not perceive what is brought before their eyes if they are at the time deep in thought, or in a fright, or listening to some loud noise—This assumption must be made, and also [sc. the assumption] that

ch. 33, lemma xliii). This passage has striking resemblances with Aristotle's account of the enkratic's preventative strategies against foreseen temptations at *NE* 1150b22–25. See also Epictetus' *On Attention (Peri Prosochēs)* in his *Discourses*, 4.12.

²⁷See Mole 2012 on the preliminary elucidation of attention as selective directedness.

²⁸Other prominent figures in the history of philosophy did the same, but unlike Aristotle defended the view that there is no need for a theory of attention. See John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, 19, 1, and especially F. H. Bradley in his *Bradley* 1886.

²⁹Aristotle's notion of attention is understudied. An exception is Hatfield 1998, who following Neumann 1971 mentions Aristotle's description of attention in *On Perception*.

³⁰The solution to the problem of simultaneous perception in *On Perception VII* is difficult to reconstruct and surprisingly understudied. See further Gregoric 2007, pp. 130–144, Barker 1981 and Marmodoro 2014, ch. 4.2.

anything is perceived more on its own than when blended. Wine, honey, and colour when pure rather than blended, and a single note by itself rather than in a chord. This is because they tend to cancel one another.³¹

This passage starts by introducing the general principle that a stronger movement tends to expel or obscure a weaker one. As an example of the truth of the general principle, Aristotle mentions cases in which a stronger cognitive stimulus expels a weaker cognitive stimulus: people who are deep in thought, frightened or deafened by a loud sound do not perceive other visual stimuli, not even if these are “before their eyes”. Presumably, the stronger cognitive stimulus either completely expels the weaker cognitive stimulus from one’s awareness, or just makes it less salient. After all, competing stimuli like notes in a chord tend to cancel one another, but do not necessarily make one another imperceptible.³²

These examples suggest first that Aristotle thought it possible for our attention to be narrowed to some specific perceptual stimuli, which expel other stimuli or make them less salient. Second, they show that specific psycho-physical principles underlie the fact that these cognitive stimuli capture our attention.³³

A similar account can be found in *On Divination*. At *Div.* 464a20–32, the subject of enquiry is the status of foresight, the capacity to foresee the future. Had they been divine gifts, episodes of foresight would have been evenly spread during night and day, and between people with different degrees of intelligence. But foresight is more common at night and among “deranged” people, or “people who are out of their mind” (*ekstatikoi*). Hence, it cannot be a divine gift.³⁴ According to Aristotle, the fact that “deranged” people have foresight can easily be explained:

With regard to the fact that some deranged people have foresight, its explanation is that their proper movements do not impede the [sc. improper]

³¹εἰ δὴ αἰεὶ ἢ μείζων κίνησις τὴν ἐλάττω ἐκκρούει—διὸ ὑποφερομένων ὑπὸ τὰ ὄμματα οὐκ αἰσθάνονται, ἐὰν τύχῃσι σφόδρα τι ἐννοῦντες ἢ φοβούμενοι ἢ ἀκούοντες πολλὴν ψόφον—τοῦτο δὲ ὑποκείσθω, αἰ ὅτι ἐκάστου μᾶλλον ἔστιν αἰσθάνεσθαι ἀπλοῦ ὄντος ἢ κεκραμένου, οἶον οἴνου ἀκράτου ἢ κεκραμένου, καὶ μέλιτος, καὶ χροῶς, καὶ τῆς νήτης μόνης ἢ ἐν τῇ διὰ πασῶν, διὰ τὸ ἀφανίζειν ἄλληλα. *On Perception* 447a11–21.

³²For a similar application of this psycho-physiological principle see *Rhet.* 1418a18 ff.

³³An extensive comparison between the two would be anachronistic, but Aristotle’s description of the psychophysical basis of attention is strikingly similar to current competition theories of attention. In these theories, the mutual suppression of competing patterns of neural stimuli is at the basis of the selectivity of attention. See Mole 2012, pp. 213 ff. and Duncan 2006.

³⁴Here, Aristotle’s polemic target might be Plato’s *Tim.* 71e1 ff.

movements, but are beaten off by them. That is why they perceive more the improper (*tōn xenikōn*) movements.³⁵

The intellect of deranged people is not prone to reflection and it is, as it were, empty (*dianoia ou phrontistikē kai hōsper erēmos*, *Div.* 464a24). For this reason, it cannot impede improper (*xenikoi*) perceptual movements. Deranged people are more likely to notice such improper movements, and to foresee (or perhaps to claim they foresee) the future in light of them. Their capacity to perceive improper movements is due to the fact that their attention cannot be restricted to proper perceptual or intellectual stimuli.³⁶

On Perception and *On Divination* describe the functionings of attention, even if they do not call it by this name. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find further evidence that Aristotle has a notion of attention: he uses the verb *prosechein* plus dative to express the notion of “paying attention to something”, and he argues that whether we pay attention to something is connected with whether we take pleasure in it:

For lovers of flutes, for instance, cannot pay attention (*prosechein*) to a conversation if they catch the sound of someone playing the flute, because they enjoy flute playing more than their present activity; and so the

³⁵ τοῦ δ' ἐνίου τῶν ἐκστατικῶν προορᾶν αἴτιον ὅτι αἱ οἰκεῖαι κινήσεις οὐκ ἐνοχλοῦσιν ἀλλ' ἀπορραπίζονται. τῶν ξενικῶν οὖν μάλιστα αἰσθάνονται. *Div.* 464a25–32 Translation of *On Divination* are loosely based on J. I. Beare 1991.

³⁶ *On Perception* and *On Divination* give us an account of the psycho-physical workings of attention, as well as a preliminary – though incomplete – sketch of the relationship between attending to something and being conscious of it. The narrowing of our attention to one cognitive stimulus seems sufficient for us to be conscious of it, but it is unclear whether attention is necessary for consciousness. Sometimes, the competition between stimuli will not result in the cancellation of one of the competing stimuli, but will merely make it weaker. We can be conscious of a cognitive stimulus even if our attention is focused on another, which will be more salient or more vivid as a result. But this is compatible both with the view that less vivid stimuli are not attended to and with the view that they are *only partially* attended to. While Aristotle discusses the physiology of attention, unlike many contemporary philosophers he is not interested in elucidating the details of its relationship with consciousness. For contemporary discussions, see e.g. Prinz 2011 and Kentridge 2011. Due to the absence textual evidence, any further speculation on the relationship between attention and consciousness in Aristotle is bound to be speculative. It is however interesting to compare his view with Philoponus' in his commentary on *De Anima* 464, 25–464, 35. See Sorabji 2005, p. 152. Philoponus is, according to Hatfield 1998, p. 17, the first thinker to analyse attention as a mental faculty (his word for attention as a mental faculty is *prosektikon*) and he uses attention to explain consciousness. See further Caston 2002, esp. the appendix. The connection between voluntary attention and consciousness becomes prominent in the Middle Ages with Peter John Olivi's critique to Aristotle and the Aristotelian idea that perception is merely passive. Olivi defends the view that perception and arguably consciousness require an active exercise of the mind's power, and he calls this power attention (*attentio*). See Olivi 1922-26, II Sent. q. 73; III, 89. and II Sent. q. 58 ad 14 Cf. Quod. 1.7 (f. 4ra). For discussion, see Pasnau 1997, pp. 130 ff.

pleasure proper to flute playing destroys the activity of conversation.³⁷

This passage describes some effects of taking pleasure in an activity. The examples chosen are all of specifically cognitive activities: listening to music, or engaging in a conversation. The effects of taking pleasure in a cognitive activity include the restriction of attention to stimuli proper to that activity and that activity only. If you enjoy listening to flute players, you won't be able to pay attention to a conversation if you hear someone playing the flute in the background. You will only pay attention to the flutes. Later in the text, Aristotle also discusses how the absence of pleasure can contribute to distraction: when we are not enjoying the show very much, we tend to eat sweets at the theatre.³⁸ Pleasure sustains attention, and lack of pleasure fosters distraction.

These passages show that Aristotle's observations on attention are quite rich and perceptive. He notices that attention can be narrowed as a result of the competition between opposing stimuli. He argues that pleasure can contribute to the narrowing of attention by excluding improper cognitive stimuli. He did not group these phenomena under the rubric of attention. This doesn't imply, however, that he did not have them in mind when accounting for the communication between parts of the soul.

Aristotle's notion of attention can help us to elucidate further what happens when the two parts of the soul communicate well or badly. Imagine a situation in which we are faced with an apparent slight and we are considering whether to retaliate. The rational part might reflect and conclude that it is wrong to retaliate against the apparent slight. It can draw this conclusion on the basis of several reasons: perhaps the slight was not intended, or perhaps—*pace* Aristotle—in general retaliation is not the appropriate response to slights. The non-rational part is cognitively limited and cannot fully follow the rational part's reasoning, it cannot for example understand the universal explanatory principles at the basis of its considerations. But a non-rational part with an appropriately expanded cognitive range is at least in principle able to get *something* of the rational part's reasoning. What exactly the non-rational part gets determines the success or failure of communication.

If the communication goes badly, the non-rational part will either be deaf to or mishear the rational part. A mishearing non-rational part might for example understand that a slight has occurred but fail to see that is not worthy of retaliation.

³⁷οἱ γὰρ φίλαυλοι ἀδυνατοῦσι τοῖς λόγοις προσέχειν, ἐὰν κατακούσωσιν αὐλοῦντος, μᾶλλον χαίροντες αὐλητικῇ τῆς παρούσης ἐνεργείας: ἢ κατὰ τὴν αὐλητικὴν οὖν ἡδονὴ τὴν περὶ τὸν λόγον ἐνέργειαν φθείρει. *NE* 1175b23–27.

³⁸*NE* 1175b10 ff.

This case is described in detail at *NE* 1149a24–b3, where weakness of the will (*akrasia*) with respect to non-rational anger (*thumos*) happens as a result of anger mishearing (*parakouein*) or listening only partially to reason (*logos*). In this passage, people who boil up in anger against the commands of reason are compared to servants who rush off before hearing the order in full, or to dogs who bark when someone knocks at the door before checking if it is a friend.³⁹

This account of failed or partially failed communication helps to reconstruct what successful communication is like. When the two parts communicate well, the non-rational part hears the gist of the rational part's command, it understands its *point*. It hears that it should not retaliate, but it does not hear that a slight has occurred. If it hears or if it is aware that a slight has occurred, it will not focus on this information becoming blind to the fact that retaliation is not in order.

This suggests that the extent to which the communication between parts is successful depends (in part) on the extent to which the non-rational part's attention is suitably narrowed.⁴⁰ Whether or not the communication between the two goes well will depend on which stimuli, among the available ones, are stronger or more vivid. If misleading stimuli are stronger than the rational part's injunctions, the non-rational part will focus on them even if the rational part declares them false. Hence, Aristotle can rely on his observations on the selective directedness of our mental lives to clarify what happens when the two parts of the soul communicate well. That is, he can rely on attention narrowing to explain what happens when the rational part and the non-rational speak with the same voice.

Further support for this interpretation can be found in Aristotle's view that the non-rational part is in a way persuaded by means of exhortations and admonitions:

The non-rational part also is persuaded in some way by *logos*, as is shown by admonition, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation.⁴¹

The point of exhortations, arguably, is to associate pleasure with the appropriate information. The point of admonitions, conversely, is to associate pain with what the non-rational part needs to be distracted from. As we know from the *Nicomachean*

³⁹On *thumos* listening only partially to the rational part see G. Pearson 2011, pp. 149 ff.

⁴⁰This interpretation is compatible with the idea that what matters for good communication is either the narrowing of the non-rational part's attention or the narrowing of the attention of the whole soul. The interpretation one prefers will depend on whether one allows some cognitive faculties to be selectively directed to certain cognitive stimuli independently of other cognitive faculties. Since Aristotle believes that we can think attentively (see above), it is plausible to think that he allowed the non-rational part to function attentively or inattentively too.

⁴¹ὅτι δὲ πείθεται πως ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον, μὴνύει καὶ ἡ νοουμένη καὶ πᾶσα ἐπιτίμησις τε καὶ παράκλησις. *NE* 1102b31–1103a1–3.

Ethics X, pleasure can sustain the narrow focus of our attention. Pain, presumably, has the opposite effect: if we find something painful, we will seek in so far as it is possible to distract ourselves from it. This is why the rational part communicates with the non-rational part by directing its attention with pleasurable exhortations and painful admonitions.⁴²

Attention can play a role both in successful intra-personal communication between parts of the soul, and also in an analogous type of inter-personal communication described in the *Rhetoric*: the communication between rhetoricians and cognitively limited audiences. The third book of the *Rhetoric* is about how to persuade weak minded (*phauloi*), or cognitively limited (*mochthērioi*) hearers.⁴³ Preambles (*prooimia*) are among the remedies (*iatreumata*) adopted by rhetoricians in order to communicate successfully with audiences of this kind.⁴⁴ An effective preamble should touch on specific attention-catching themes:

Hearers pay attention (*prosektikoi*) to things that are important, that concern their own interests, that are astonishing, that are pleasant; hence one should give them the idea that the argument (*logos*) deals with such subjects. To make them inattentive (*mē prosektikous*), [sc. one should give them the idea that the matter] is unimportant, that it does not concern them, that it is painful. But we must not lose sight of the fact that all such things are outside the argument (*exō tou logou*), for they are only addressed to a hearer whose judgement is poor (*phaulon*) and who is ready to listen to what is beside the point; for if he is not a man of this kind, there is no need of a preamble, except just to make a summary statement of the subject, so that, like a body, it may have a head.⁴⁵

Weak minded audiences have the tendency to be distracted by what is beside the point (*exō tou pragmatos*). These audiences are not really in the position to follow a

⁴²The role of pain in sustaining or distracting the focus of one's attention is difficult to reconstruct, on the one hand it seems that the prospect of pain leads us to divert our attention away from what we find painful, on the other hand it seems that *felt* pain prevents us from focusing on anything other than itself. On the idea that the pain can direct our attention to the vicious aspects of our actions and thereby play a role in moral education see further Curzer 2002, pp. 160.

⁴³See respectively *Rhet.* III 1.5 and 4.7. I follow Cope 1877, p. 169 who suggests that *phaulos* and *mochthērios* “applied to the audience or judges, mean here not morally bad, but only defective in intellect and patience, too ignorant and frivolous to attend long to sound and serious reasoning”.

⁴⁴*Rhet.* 1415a24–25.

⁴⁵προσεκτικοὶ δὲ τοῖς μεγάλοις, τοῖς ἰδίοις, τοῖς θαυμαστοῖς, τοῖς ἡδέσιν· διὸ δεῖ ἐμποιεῖν ὡς περὶ τοιούτων ὁ λόγος· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ προσεκτικούς, ὅτι μικρόν, ὅτι οὐδὲν πρὸς ἐκείνους, ὅτι λυπηρόν. δεῖ δὲ μὴ λανθάνειν ὅτι πάντα ἔξω τοῦ λόγου τὰ τοιαῦτα· πρὸς φαῦλον γὰρ ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος ἀκούοντα· ἐπεὶ ἂν μὴ τοιοῦτος ᾖ, οὐθὲν δεῖ προοιμίου, ἀλλ' ἢ ὅσον τὸ πρᾶγμα εἰπεῖν κεφαλαιωδῶς, ἵνα ἔχη ὡσπερ σῶμα κεφαλὴν. *Rhet.* 1415a38–b9.

complex and long argument (*logos*). Hence, the rhetorician will tailor her speech to their needs and capture their attention by means of rhetorical strategies which are not strictly speaking argumentative (they are outside the argument, or *exō tou logou*). These strategies include beginning the speech with a specifically crafted preamble. The preamble should give the hearers the idea that the speech is about a subject that will please them, surprise them or concern them, as opposed to a subject that will bore them, or worse bring them pain. If the preamble is successful, the hearers won't be distracted by what is beside the point, and they may be persuaded by the argument.

This rhetorical example is a striking *interpersonal* analogue of the *intrapersonal* communication between parts of the soul. In both cases we find a cognitively limited audience that has to be persuaded. In both cases the audience is easily distracted, misled, and prone to follow what is beside the argument's point. In both cases the audience's ability to listen can be improved by narrowing the focus of its attention. In both cases, finally, this result can be achieved by associating pleasure (among other things) with the subject on which the audience needs to focus. If the audience finds the topic of the speech pleasant, it won't be distracted by tangential issues. If the non-rational part is suitably exhorted, it will listen to reason better. Hence, the psychology of persuasion in the *Rhetoric* confirms the moral psychology of attention in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

There are limits to the extent to which we can apply interpersonal analogies to the intrapersonal communication between parts of the soul. For example, it might be the case that a rational part whose workings are impeded by an unruly non-rational part would be unable to even produce exhortations and admonitions.⁴⁶ Thus, it might be unable to capture the attention of the non-rational part. It might also be the case that intrapersonal communication can reach higher levels of integration than interpersonal communication. Perhaps, "speaking with the same voice" is rare if not impossible among interlocutors who are also different people.

Nevertheless, Aristotle is the first to illustrate the communication between parts of the soul by introducing the *interpersonal* analogy of a father giving orders to his child. The *Rhetoric* offers us an account of interpersonal persuasion which is strikingly close to the account of intrapersonal persuasion we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Furthermore, this account can be sustained by Aristotle's observations on attention in his ethical and psychological works. These seem to be three good reasons to use these analogies to gain insight into the cognitive background of the successful communication between parts of the soul.

⁴⁶Broadie 1991, pp. 107 ff.

The expanded cognitive range of our perceptual faculties explains to some extent how the rational part and the non-rational part communicate. It cannot explain, however, the perfect communication that characterise virtuous souls. In order to make room for the possibility of perfect communication, Aristotle relies on the notion of attention.

Although the expanded perceptual range and attention narrowing are two distinct aspects of the peculiarity of human perception and human thought, they are interrelated. The more discriminative perception is, the more responsive it will be to thought's attempt to feed it information and the more its attention can be narrowed. For example, if perception can discriminate measles marks as measles marks, it can be instructed by thought to look for these marks. The focus of its attention, in addition, can be narrowed to measles marks rather than other marks on a patient's body. If perception is unable to discriminate measles marks, it may not be directed and its focus may not be narrowed in this way.

This account suggests that the peculiarity of human thought, human perception and human attention are at the basis of Aristotle's account of at least two related cognitive phenomena: the persuasion of recalcitrant non-rational desires,⁴⁷ and the persuasion of "weak minded" audiences.⁴⁸ This implies that the combined force of an expanded perceptual range and attention narrowing might be effective against a further case of cognitive dissonance: perceptual illusions. Perceptual illusions involve the clash between a rational belief and a perceptual appearance which persists despite being contradicted by the rational belief.⁴⁹ The cognitive background of illusions is the same as the cognitive background of recalcitrant desires, which suggests that if the former can be corrected or even prevented by the narrowing of the desirer's attention, the latter can be too.

This consequence of my reconstruction of Aristotle's account is not philosophically implausible: it is easy to envisage a parallel between the correction of a recalcitrant desire and the correction of an illusion. If someone sees a piece of cake as desirable, she might be unable to remove the appearance simply in light of the rational belief that too much cake is in fact undesirable because it is fattening. This can explain why being

⁴⁷For further discussion of recalcitrant desires see chapter 4.5 and 6.3.

⁴⁸There are two other interesting cases, I think, in which the peculiarity of human thought and the narrowing of one's attention enable the communication between the rational part and the non-rational part. One is recollection, and the other is the preventative strategy adopted by enkratics not to fall prey of vicious desires. Recollection is a rational search for a perceptual and bodily appearance (see *Mem.* 453a4 ff.). Enkratics can prevent pleasure and pain from causing desires if they raise their calculation first, presumably thus eliminating unwanted cognitive stimuli (see *NE* 1150b22–25).

⁴⁹*DA* 428b1 ff.

persuaded that a cake is fattening often doesn't prevent one from desiring it. Yet, if someone focuses her attention on how sick she felt the last time she had too much cake, she might be able to remove the appearance of the cake as desirable. Similarly, holding the rational belief that a very realistic painted window is fake doesn't make it look fake. Focusing on the perspectival mistakes in the painted window shades, however, might suffice to remove the false appearance. Furthermore, the fact that Aristotle discusses the possibility of controlling recalcitrant desires, but doesn't discuss the possibility of removing perceptual illusions doesn't count against the plausibility of pressing the analogy between the two cases. His (and perhaps ours too) specific interest in the correction of recalcitrant desires might lie in the ethical importance of getting rid of them.⁵⁰

2.4 Conclusion

Part of what makes the human non-rational soul peculiar is that its discriminative and desiderative range is and can be expanded in virtue of its cohabitation with thought. Although the non-rational part is blind to universal explanatory accounts, it can be in a way persuaded by the rational part. In addition, thought's persuasive powers are enhanced if the non-rational part's attention is suitably narrowed.

The rational and non-rational part of the human soul can communicate precisely because of their peculiar nature. The peculiarly wide discriminative range of the non-rational part can make communication easier because it enables us to narrow the focus of its attention. Its peculiar cohabitation with the non-rational part enables the human rational part to play a role in the narrowing of attention to the appropriate cognitive stimuli.

The rational part and non-rational part interact similarly in a range of different contexts, including the persuasion of non-rational desires and the suppression of improper perceptual stimuli. However, as I argue in the next chapter, there is at least one important context in which they do not: the context of practical cognition or of cognition whose aim is action. The analysis of the special case of practical cognition contributes to the explanation of Aristotle's claim that moral education requires perceptual training (see chapter 5.6) and of his view that *phronēsis* is a distinctive kind of rational excellence (see chapter 6).

⁵⁰See chapter 3 and 4.5, where I argue that getting rid of recalcitrant non-rational desires is important because, unlike perceptual illusions, they can prompt action.

Chapter 3

Overpowering the Non-Rational Part

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the connection between cognition and action. I start by giving an account of practical cognition. I argue that practical cognition can be broadly understood as any kind of cognition with a view to action. It can be rational or non-rational, as well as evaluative or non-evaluative. I suggest that Aristotle considers practical cognition worthy of independent analysis because human practical cognition is both peculiarly human and of fundamental importance for his ethics.

I then move to an analysis of how practical cognition guides human action. On the basis of Aristotle's treatise *On Dreams*, I argue that in the non-evaluative context rational cognition assesses the truth of non-rational appearances, and thereby regulates action. Declaring a non-evaluative appearance false is always sufficient to prevent us from acting on it (unless for some reason we have the goal of acting on false appearances). Looking at the way in which we act is a good way to test which *non-evaluative* appearances we take to be true.

In the last section, I argue that this conclusion does not generalise to the evaluative context. By looking at the conflict between rational and non-rational desires and at their cognitive background, we discover that for Aristotle being aware that an evaluative appearance is false is not always sufficient to prevent us from acting on it. Hence, our actions and behaviour do not always respond to what we take to be true or false. Being aware that an appearance is false is always sufficient to prevent us from acting on it in the non-evaluative context, but not in the evaluative one. This disunity raises the question whether rational practical cognition can regulate human action in the evaluative context. I suggest an answer to this question in chapter 6, where I argue that regulating action and desires is the task of a distinctively human rational excellence: *phronēsis*.

3.2 Practical Cognition

In both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima*, Aristotle draws a distinction between two kinds of rational cognition. He argues that there is a difference between rational cognition whose goal is truth *and* action, and rational cognition whose goal is only truth. He calls the former practical and the latter theoretical.¹ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, these two kinds of rational cognition even have distinct objects: practical rational cognition deals with things that can be otherwise, theoretical rational cognition deals with necessary truths.²

Practical cognition is not limited to rational cognition, but it includes non-rational cognition too. Perception and *phantasia*, as well as thought, can be practical. That Aristotle takes non-rational cognition to be, in part, practical (at least in so far as it can have purposive behaviour as its goal) is evident from *De Anima* and *De Motu Animalium*. In both texts, the two movers involved in animal locomotion are cognition (understood as including thought, *phantasia* and perception) and desire.³

The category of practical cognition, thus, cuts across the distinction between rational cognition and non-rational cognition. Furthermore, it cuts across another distinction we may draw between evaluative cognition and non-evaluative cognition. Evaluative cognition, unlike non-evaluative cognition, sees its objects either in a favourable or in a non-favourable light. Thus, an object of evaluative cognition might be seen as pleasant, painful, good, bad, attractive, unattractive, and so on. An object of non-evaluative cognition is not seen as possessing favourable or unfavourable features of this kind.⁴

For Aristotle, practical cognition does not overlap with the kind of evaluative cognition I described. Sometimes, grasping an object without seeing it in a favourable or unfavourable light does make a difference for cognition with a view to action. In *De Motu* 701a23–25, we are explicitly told that the premisses involved in the kind of reasoning whose aim is action are premisses “of the good” and “of the possible”. Since

¹See *DA* 433a13–15 and *NE* 1139a28–30. In this passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle more specifically distinguishes between productive (*poiētikē*) and practical (*praktikē*) rational cognition and theoretical (*theōrētikē*) rational cognition.

²*NE* 1139b5–10.

³See especially *De Motu* 701a5 and *DA* 433a9–11. In *De Motu*, Aristotle clearly says that perception and *phantasia* play the same role as thought in locomotion, in *De Anima*, he writes that *phantasia* in the context of locomotion should be seen as a kind of thinking. The idea is, I think, that all these cognitive capacities can be employed with a view to action, or purposive motion.

⁴Evaluative cognition, as I understand it here, is not necessarily concerned with normative claims about what ought to be done or should be done. My account of evaluative cognition is indebted to the one proposed by Moss 2012, esp. ch. 1. Unlike Jessica Moss, however, here I don’t take evaluative cognition to always involve some form of *finding-good* or *finding-bad*.

premisses of the possible are not necessarily evaluatively charged, practical reasoning involves both evaluative cognition and non-evaluative cognition: it figures out what is good and bad for us and it also works out what possibilities are there for us to achieve what is good for us, and avoid what is bad. Similarly, non-rational cognition with a view to action or purposive movement might make us aware of both evaluative and non-evaluative features of our environment that make the difference for action. For example, non-evaluative perceptual cognition might help us recognise a drink when we are seeking to quench our thirst (see *De Motu* 701a31–33). Non-rational practical cognition can be evaluative too: it can, at the very least, characterize things as pleasant or to be gone for.⁵

Practical cognition, i.e. cognition with a view to action, can be for Aristotle rational, non-rational, evaluative or non-evaluative.⁶ Even though evaluative cognition is often practical in so far as it plays a role in motivating us to act, being evaluative is not enough for cognition to count as practical. In *De Anima*, as well as in *De Motu*, Aristotle carefully specifies that there are some instances of evaluative cognition which are not action oriented: practical cognition is not concerned with just any fine (*kalon*) thing, but with the good in action.⁷ Similarly, theoretical cognition can sometimes contemplate good, pleasant or fearful things without a view to action.⁸

This brief sketch of practical cognition raises the issue whether Aristotle is at all right in isolating cognition with a view to action as a *specific kind* of cognition. Practical cognition, as it has been described so far, has no distinctive *cognitive* features of its own, it merely has a distinctive end in view: action.⁹

The reason why Aristotle thinks that practical cognition is worthy of independent analysis, however, might simply be that practical cognition is especially important in the distinctively human realm of ethically relevant action. Divinities do not engage in cognition with a view to action. They only engage in theoretical contemplation.¹⁰ Non-human animals do engage in cognition with a view to purposive behaviour. But

⁵See, *inter alia*, *DA* 431a8–15. See ch. 4 for further discussion of evaluative perception, *phantasia* and thought.

⁶My discussion here is indebted to Moss 2012, ch. 1.

⁷*De Motu* 700b25–27. See also *NE* 1111b20–30, where Aristotle describes wishes and hopes for things that we find good even though they cannot be brought about by our actions. The kind of evaluative cognition involved in these wishes is not practical, because it cannot have action in view.

⁸*DA* 432b27 ff.

⁹For a similar objection against the division between practical intellect and theoretical intellect in book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Bostock 2000, pp. 74–81. Cf. Olfert 2014, pp. 209, who thinks that the distinctiveness of practical reasoning is grounded in the distinctiveness of practical truth.

¹⁰*NE* 1178b23 ff.

purposive behaviour in non-human animals is different from human action because it cannot be governed by rational cognition. Hence, non-human animal behaviour is not the proper object of ethical evaluation.¹¹

In what follows, I look at cases of cognitive conflict in order to analyse the distinctive way in which practical cognition governs human action. I suggest that there are some discrepancies between how cognition regulates human action in case of evaluative cognitive conflict and in case of non-evaluative cognitive conflict. In the non-evaluative case, we do not act on what we take to be false.¹² In the evaluative case, we sometimes do, even when acting on false appearances goes against what we recognise as our goals.

3.3 On Dreams and Illusions

Rational and non-rational cognitions can guide our behaviour. We can reach for a drink because it tastes good, or because we have reason to think it is good for our health. Rational and non-rational cognition, however, sometimes conflict. And they do so both in the evaluative case and in the non-evaluative case. A mirage might look like water even if we are persuaded that there is no water in front of us, and a drink might look good even if we are persuaded that it is not (because, say, it is unhealthy). This raises the question whether our behaviour follows the same guiding principles in case of evaluative and non-evaluative cognitive conflict. Surely, not all evaluative and non-evaluative cognitive conflicts matter for action. But when they do, is there any principled way to determine how beings like us will act?

We might think it obvious that, in case of non-evaluative conflict, there is a principled way in which cognition guides action. Whenever rational cognition declares an appearance false, we do not act on it. We do not run toward the oasis if we are convinced that it is a mirage, we don't try to hold the tower of Pisa in our hands, even if, when looked at from afar, it seems little.¹³ However, in the evaluative case, the principle that whenever rational cognition declares an appearance false we do not act on it seems less obvious. Arguably, many of us drink things they know are unhealthy because they taste good, or smoke even though they are convinced it is bad.

In what follows, I argue that Aristotle believes that there is a discrepancy between the evaluative and the non-evaluative case. When it comes to non-evaluative conflicts,

¹¹*NE* 1149b31–1150a5.

¹²Unless, of course, we set ourselves the aim of acting on false appearances (in order to mislead someone, for example).

¹³Unless, of course, we are joking. But in that case, the point of the joke is to do something surprising, or something we would not normally do in the given circumstances.

he thinks that it is always sufficient for rational cognition to declare an appearance false for us not to act on it. When it comes to evaluative conflicts, being aware or convinced that an appearance is false does not always prevent us from acting on it.¹⁴

In order to spell out the discrepancy, I want to start with an analysis of the non-evaluative case, which seems less controversial. In *On Dreams*, Aristotle suggests that if one is aware of the falsity of an appearance, one won't act on it:

When in the grip of anger or of all desires everyone becomes easy to deceive and the more so the more they are affected. For this reason to those in fever animals appear on the wall due to some small similarities of the wall-cracks put together [sc. and the animals]. And sometimes these [sc. appearances] increase with the affections, so that, if the fever is not strong, it doesn't escape their notice that they are false, if the affection is stronger, they move towards them.¹⁵

Fever, dreams, desires and affections of different sorts give rise to false appearances. The false appearances described in this passage are non-evaluative: the example chosen is the illusion that animals are crawling on the wall. When the affection is weak, the person who has a false appearance can be aware of its falsity. When the affection is stronger, however, the person who has the false appearance might even act on it. The implicit assumption is that when one is unaware of the appearance's falsity one might act on it. Conversely, being aware of the falsity of an appearance prevents us from acting on it. But what precisely does being aware of the falsity of an appearance require? In this passage, Aristotle doesn't explain it. In the lines that immediately follow, he however suggests that adjudicating the appearance's truth is a task for thought:

The reason why this happens is that the authority (*kurion*) and that from which appearances arise do not discriminate by means of the same capacity,

¹⁴For the opposite view in the ancient world, see especially the Stoics (perhaps with the exception of Posidonius): *LS* 53A5 (SVF 2.988). See also *LS* 33I and *LS* 53S. *Contra* Moss 2012, pp. 117–118, who draws an analogy between the Stoics and Aristotle on these matters, and *contra* McCready-Flora 2013b, pp. 26–27, who suggests that for Aristotle what a subject considers true, at some level, is the body of information upon which her actions are based. If I am right, this is true in the non-evaluative case, but not in the evaluative case.

¹⁵ἐν ὄργαῖς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἐπιθυμίαις εὐαπάτητοι γίνονται πάντες, καὶ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ ἂν μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ὄσιν. διὸ καὶ τοῖς πυρέττουσιν ἐνίοτε φαίνεται ζῶα ἐν τοῖς τοίχοις ἀπὸ μικρᾶς ὁμοιότητος τῶν γραμμῶν συντιθεμένων. καὶ ταῦτ' ἐνίοτε συνεπιτείνει τοῖς πάθεσιν οὕτως, ὥστε, ἂν μὲν μὴ σφόδρα κάμνωσι, μὴ λανθάνειν ὅτι ψεῦδος, ἐὰν δὲ μείζον ἢ τὸ πάθος, καὶ κινεῖσθαι πρὸς αὐτά. *Insomn.* 460b9–16. Translations of *De Insomniis* are loosely based on Gallop 1990.

a sign of this is that the sun appears a foot wide, but often something else speaks against the appearance.¹⁶

Aristotle argues that in order to explain the phenomena described in the previous passage (*aition tou sumbainein tauta*), we need to keep in mind that “the cognitive authority” (*to kurion*) and the faculty or capacity from which appearances arise are not the same. Then he mentions an example in which the authority is clearly thought and the source of false appearances is *phantasia*: the example of the sun appearing a foot wide to someone who knows it to be bigger than the earth. The very same example is used at *De Anima* 428b2–5, where it elucidates the contrast between the workings of belief and the workings of *phantasia*.¹⁷

Aristotle’s thesis that distinguishing the cognitive authority from the capacity that gives rise to false appearances “explains the phenomena” can be interpreted in two ways. One of two different phenomena might be the *explanandum*: either the fact that sometimes we have conflicting appearances, or the fact that sometimes we are deceived by a false appearance. In the first case, the idea is that in order to understand why conflicting appearances occur we need to keep in mind that we have different discriminative capacities which can function independently from one another. On this interpretation, the passage does not tell us much about how we can adjudicate an appearance’s falsity.

However, if its aim is to explain how deception occurs, this passage does tell us something about how we can adjudicate an appearance’s falsity. The suggestion here would be that in order to understand deception we need to distinguish between: (i) the “cognitive authority” which scrutinizes appearances assessing their truth or falsity and (ii) the faculty from which false appearances arise. This interpretation seems to me the most plausible one, especially in light of what we discover about the “cognitive authority” in what follows these remarks.

The most telling passage is perhaps *Insomn.* 461b23–462a8, where the cognitive authority determines whether or not we are deceived:

When he perceived, the authority and the discriminative capacity (*to kurion kai to epikrion*) didn’t call the *phantasia* Coriscus, but prompted by it, called the real person Coriscus. Hence the thing (*ho aisthanomenon*) that says so when it is perceiving, if it is not completely held back by

¹⁶αἴτιον δὲ τοῦ συμβαίνειν ταῦτα τὸ μὴ κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν κρίνειν τὸ τε κύριον καὶ ὅτι τὰ φαντάσματα γίνεται, τούτου δὲ σημεῖον ὅτι φαίνεται μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ποδιαῖος, ἀντίφρησι δὲ πολλάκις ἕτερον τι πρὸς τὴν φαντασίαν. *Insomn.* 460b16–20.

¹⁷On the sun illusion, see also chapter 2.2.

blood, now is moved by the movements in the sensory organs as if it were perceiving (*hōsper aisthanomenon*), and what is merely similar seems to be the real thing. And the power of sleep is such that it makes this pass unnoticed. If it escaped someone’s notice that a finger was pressed under his eye, not only would one thing appear to be two, but he would also believe it to be two things, if it doesn’t escape his notice, it would still appear but he wouldn’t believe it. In the same way while sleeping, if one perceives (*aisthanētai*) that he is asleep and perceives the sleeping affection in which the perception arises, Coriscus appears, but in him something says that it seems to be Coriscus, but it is not Coriscus ... if it escapes his notice that he is asleep, nothing contradicts the appearance.¹⁸

In what precedes this passage, *phantasiai* are described as remnants of previous sensory impressions. Thus, the *phantasia* of Coriscus is a remnant of a previous perception of Coriscus: although the *phantasia* is not Coriscus himself, it derives from a perception of Coriscus, and it is thereby correct to say that it is like Coriscus. When we perceive correctly, the cognitive authority calls the perceived person Coriscus. When we misperceive, or when we dream, it is as if we perceived: we are subject to appearances which are similar to the real thing. In these cases, the cognitive authority can sometimes notice that we are in a perturbed condition (due to sleep or a finger pressed under our eye). The cognitive authority, however, sometimes fails to perform this task, which explains why we sometimes are deceived. If the cognitive authority is in charge of regulating whether we are deceived by false appearances, it is in charge of declaring them true or false.

¹⁸ ὅτε δὲ ἤσθάνετο, οὐκ ἔλεγε Κορίσκον τὸ κύριον καὶ τὸ ἐπικρίνον, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκεῖνον Κορίσκον τὸν ἀληθινόν. ὁ δὲ καὶ αἰσθανόμενον λέγει τοῦτο, ἐὰν μὴ παντελῶς κατέχηται ὑπὸ τοῦ αἵματος, ὥσπερ αἰσθανόμενον τοῦτο κινεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν κινήσεων τῶν ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις, καὶ δοκεῖ τὸ ὅμοιον αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ ἀληθές· καὶ τοσαύτη τοῦ ὕπνου ἢ δύναμις ὥστε ποιεῖν τοῦτο λανθάνειν. ὥσπερ οὖν εἴ τινα λανθάνοι ὑποβαλλόμενος ὁ δάκτυλος τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ, οὐ μόνον φανεῖται ἀλλὰ καὶ δόξει εἶναι δύο τὸ ἓν, ἂν δὲ μὴ λανθάνῃ, φανεῖται μὲν οὐ δόξει δέ, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις, ἐὰν μὲν αἰσθάνηται ὅτι καθεύδει, καὶ τοῦ πάθους ἐν ᾧ ἡ αἴσθησις τοῦ ὑπνωτικοῦ, φαίνεται μὲν, λέγει δέ τι ἐν αὐτῷ ὅτι φαίνεται μὲν Κορίσκος, οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ὁ Κορίσκος ... ἐὰν δὲ λανθάνῃ ὅτι καθεύδει, οὐδὲν ἀντιφῆσει τῇ φαντασίᾳ. *Insomn.* 461b25–462a7. This passage raises the question whether perception can grasp incidental perceptibles and grasp a particular as Coriscus. If my analysis in the first two chapters is correct, we have good reason to think that it can. It is worth noting that here Aristotle associates the authority (*to kurion*) with the perceptual faculty: he refers to it as perceiving or working as if it perceived; he writes that we are not deceived by dreams when we *perceive* that we are dreaming. This suggests that perception, as well as thought, can be in charge of judging the truth and falsity of the appearance (cf. *Insomn.* 460b20–22 and *Insomn.* 461b5–6). This account tells against the idea that declaring appearances false is a function peculiar to thought and therefore a mark of rationality (*contra* McCready-Flora 2013b, esp. section V). It suggests, in addition, that according to Aristotle non-human animals might be capable of doubting and declaring appearances false perceptually. See also Modrak 1987, pp 138–139, *contra* Gallop 1990, p. 147.

This discussion of deception and action control in cases of non-evaluative conflict suggests that when there is a clash of non-evaluative appearances, rational cognition (the authority) can declare one of the appearances false. Whenever it does declare an appearance false, it prevents us from acting on it. This action-regulating power of rational cognition, however, has so far only been presented as always effective against non-evaluative appearances.

3.4 Cognitive Conflict and *Akrasia*

As I suggested in chapter 2.2 and 2.3, recalcitrant desires have the same cognitive background of perceptual illusions. This account of recalcitrant desires is most explicit in *EE* 1235b25–29, where Aristotle argues that we can have a desire for something that perceptually appears good even though we think it not to be good. Recalcitrant desires of this kind involve a clash of evaluative appearances, and the agents who experience them are aware that the cognitive basis of their non-rational desire is a false appearance.

This kind of cognitive conflict is characteristic of enkratic and akratic agents. Akratics and enkratics are not conflicted merely because they have desires for different things that cannot be satisfied at the same time. Their condition is not like the one of someone who would like, say, to meet a friend for dinner and to go for an evening swim, but knows that she won't be able to do both. Nor do akratics and enkratics simply find themselves in difficult situations, where different and contrasting desiderative responses are appropriate. They are different from brave people willing to face what they correctly assess as dangerous for a good cause.¹⁹

Since their condition does not involve incompatible desires for two or more incompatible things, akratics and enkratics are also different from people who face what they fear for wrong or irrational motives. Such people do not have conflicting attitudes toward the same thing, but overcome their fear of a certain thing in virtue of their desire for another.²⁰ At *EE* 1229b35–40 there is a comparison between encountering

¹⁹Thus, they are different from brave people as described in *NE* 1115b10–12 and *EE* 1228a25 ff. See Plato's parallel discussion of the division of the soul in *Rep.* 436b8 ff. and *Rep.* 602e4 for what can be taken as a description of the cognitive background of conflicting desires. This suggests that Aristotle may allow that virtuous people are conflicted (while *EE* 1228b17–29 suggests that virtuous people are, sometimes, conflicted, *NE I* 13 and *NE* 1119b15–18 suggests that they are not. For further discussion, see G. Pearson 2012, pp. 227 ff.).

²⁰Aristotle's discussion of the Celts in *EE* 1229b26–30 gestures toward a case of this sort (see also *NE* 1117a1–25).

(*peripiptein*) death because of *akrasia* and dying (*apothnēskēin*) because of *akrasia* that emphasizes precisely this difference:

For if dying were pleasant, the bad person would have often died because of his *akrasia*, just as now—since what causes death is pleasant though not death itself—many knowingly encounter death because of their *akrasia*.²¹

Dying because of *akrasia* would only be possible for someone who found death attractive while aware that it is bad. Aristotle implies, however, that it is uncommon to find death attractive or pleasant. Knowingly encountering death because of *akrasia*, on the other hand, is more common. This is because many things an akratic would find pleasant are deadly, and akratics pursue them knowing that they are. Even in this case, however, the desiderative conflict characteristic of the akratic is a clash between the desire to pursue and the desire to avoid something that she non-rationally assesses as good (because it is pleasant), and rationally assesses as not good (because it is deadly). It is not a clash between the desire for something pleasant and the independent fear of some other bad thing.

The desires of an akratic or enkratic, thus, are not merely incompatible or opposed attitudes toward different things, but *contrary* attitudes toward the same thing. These contrary desiderative attitudes are of different kinds: one of them is rational, and the other non-rational. In a conflicted soul, non-rational desires oppose and fight against reason's urges toward what is best.²²

It is not easy to reconstruct the cognitive basis of the akratic's or enkratic's desiderative conflict. In some cases, it is plausible to think that the akratic and the enkratic do not hold contradictory assessments of their object of desire. Perhaps, they assess it as good in some respects, and bad in others: they take a certain drink to be, at the same time, pleasant but unhealthy. This evaluative assessment of the drink is not, *per se*, mistaken or even conflicted. Where the enkratic and akratic go wrong is in responding with conflicting desires to their evaluative assessment.²³

In other cases, which will be at the centre of my attention in this section, the evaluative cognitions at the basis of akratic conflicting desires contradict each other. For example, the non-rational part characterizes an object of desire as having a positive

²¹εἰ γὰρ ἦν ἡδὺ τὸ ἀποθνήσκειν, πολλάκις ἂν δι' ἀκρασίαν ἀπέθνησκον οἱ ἀκόλαστοι, ὥσπερ καὶ νῦν αὐτοῦ μὲν τοῦ ἀποθνήσκειν οὐκ ὄντος ἡδέος, τῶν ποιητικῶν δ' αὐτοῦ, πολλοὶ δι' ἀκρασίαν περιπίπτουσιν εἰδότες, ... Trans. of the *Eudemian Ethics* are loosely based on Solomon's in Barnes 1991.

²²*NE* 1102b15–20. Cf. *NE* 1111b15, where Aristotle clarifies that non-rational desires (*epithumiai*) cannot be contraries (*enantiein*), but decisions (*prohaireseis*) and non-rational desires can.

²³This would be an extremist version of what David Charles calls a “desire-based” account of the difference between akratics, enkratics and virtuous people Charles 1984, ch. 4A.

evaluative feature, say goodness, and the rational part denies that it has this feature in the way the non-rational part says it does.

The *Nicomachean Ethics* often suggests that the enkratic's and the akratic's rational and non-rational part of the soul contradict each other, and the cognitive theory in *De Anima* can explain this kind of cognitive conflict. In *NE* 1103a25–28, the wise and brave person differs from enkratics and akratics in so far as the non-rational part of her soul agrees with *logos* on everything, or speaks with the same voice as *logos* (*homōphonein*). The intended contrast is a contrast between souls in which the parts of the soul disagree, or contradict each other.²⁴ The same kind of contrast is described at *EE* 1235b25–29, where an appearance of goodness is contradicted by the belief that the object of desire is not good.

Arguably, in *De Anima* contrary rational and non-rational desires are based on contradictory evaluative cognitions too:

Now desires arise which are contrary to one another, and this occurs whenever reason and the appetites are opposed, that is, in those animals which have a perception of time (for *logos* bids us resist because of the future, while appetite has regard only to the immediate present; for the pleasure of the moment appears absolutely pleasurable and absolutely good from failure to look at the future).²⁵

Animals who have a sense of time (as well as reason) can experience contrary (*enantiai*) rational and non-rational desires. This is because rational desires take into account future consequences, whereas non-rational appetites are stuck to the present. While *logos* is able to work out that what seems pleasant or good is not really, or not absolutely, good or pleasant, appetite is not. Appetite fails to see that the pleasant is only immediately pleasant, and would fail to see the good as only qualifiedly good.²⁶

Here, akratic appetites are based on a mistaken characterization of the object of desire as pleasant and/or as good without qualification (*haplōs*). The desired object is not really good or pleasant, but at most it is pleasant with qualification or good with qualification (e.g. pleasant for an addicted agent, but not for a healthy one, good

²⁴The passage suggests, I think, this kind of contrast, even though it does not rule out other kinds of contrast. The parts of the soul might fail to speak with the same voice because they contradict each other or because they desire to act in contrary ways.

²⁵ἐπεὶ δ' ὁρέξεις γίνονται ἐναντία ἀλλήλαις, τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει ὅταν ὁ λόγος καὶ αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι ἐναντία ὦσι, γίνεται δ' ἐν τοῖς χρόνου αἴσθησιν ἔχουσιν (ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς διὰ τὸ μέλλον ἀνθέλκειν κελεύει, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία διὰ τὸ ἤδη φαίνεται γὰρ τὸ ἤδη ἡδὺ καὶ ἀπλῶς ἡδὺ καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἀπλῶς, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν τὸ μέλλον), *DA* 433b5–10.

²⁶As Hicks points out, these are two separate mistakes. See Hicks 1907, p. 561. See however Moss 2012, ch 5 for the view that they should be seen as the same mistake.

for a sick animal, but not for a healthy one).²⁷ Contrary rational and non-rational desires are based on contradictory cognitions: non-rational appetite pursues what look like pleasant and good things, reason holds us back in light of the consideration that such things are either pleasant and good *with qualification*, or not pleasant and good at all. This interpretation does not imply that non-rational cognition is able to work out that certain things are good or pleasant everything considered or overall. That would be implausible, especially in so far as the non-rational part is not capable of generalising from particulars. The interpretation merely suggests that non-rational cognition fails to notice the qualifications which are evident upon reflection on the present (and future) circumstances.²⁸

In cases like the one described above, akratic and enkratic non-rational desires are based on false evaluative representations. In addition, akratics and enkratics are aware of the falsity of such representations: their rational part works out that what they desire is at most pleasant or good *with qualification*. Given the similarities with the non-evaluative case, one might think that in this case, too, being aware of the falsity of the appearance always prevents the agent from acting on it.²⁹

Aristotle's interpretation of *akrasia*, as I argue in what follows, suggests however that being aware of the falsity of an evaluative appearance is not always enough to prevent one from acting on it. This is because at least some akratics act on false evaluative appearances and are aware of their falsity while they act. Akratics of this kind are aware of their *akrasia* at the moment of action. They do things they know are overall bad for them because they seem unqualifiedly good, or unqualifiedly pleasant. Thus, they act on appearances they take to be false.

Whether or not Aristotle admitted the existence of this kind of self-aware *akrasia* is controversial, especially because he famously also believed that *akrasia* implies some

²⁷On Aristotle's view that non-virtuous people can be wrong about what they take to be or perceive as pleasant see e.g. *NE* 1090a11, *NE* 1176a8–22.

²⁸For this interpretation, I follow Moss 2009, pp. 127 ff. (see Moss 2012, Ch. 5). The passage doesn't *have to* be interpreted in this way. According to Irwin 1988a, ch. 15 fn. 20, Irwin 1986, pp. 81 ff. and Price 2013 (see however Price 1995, ch. 3 fn. 3), for example, here the failure to see the qualifications of the present pleasures and goods is not an elucidation of the failure of the non-rational part. On the contrary, it is a further point that clarifies the failure of those agents who do not look at the future when deliberating. Thus, it should not be taken to explain the cognitive basis of akratic and enkratic non-rational desires. As long as the passage is not taken to imply that the non-rational part can grasp what is good or pleasant *overall*, both interpretations seem to me possible. Hence, the passage can offer a plausible explanation of why Aristotle seems to envisage a contradiction in the evaluative cognitions of conflicted agents in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

²⁹See Moss 2009.

form of ignorance.³⁰ In this chapter, I won't discuss the akratic's ignorance: it might be the case that her ignorance can be explained without assuming that the akratic doesn't have access to her rational judgements at the moment of action, or it might be the case that Aristotle's account of *akrasia* is not wholly coherent.³¹ Nor will I be able to take into account the huge and highly sophisticated literature on Aristotle's account of *akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics VII. 3*. All I will argue is that the possibility for the akratic to be aware that she is acting against her best judgement finds what seems to me compelling textual support in *De Anima*, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*.

In *Nicomachean Ethics VII. 1*, Aristotle, following his usual method, defines the subject of enquiry (*akrasia*) and lists the opinions and the claims people make about it. He emphasizes that it is widely claimed that

The akratic knows that what he does is bad, but does it because of what affects him, while the enkratic, knowing that his appetites are bad, because of reason does not follow them.³²

In order to judge whether Aristotle agrees that the akratic is aware that her action is bad, or that the akratic acts knowingly (*eidōs*) against her evaluative considered judgements, we must therefore focus on the details of his own view, which is stated in the following chapters. In *NE 1150b20–24*, we find the first hint that the akratic can be aware that she is acting against her best judgement. The passage describes two different kinds of *akrasia*:

One type of *akrasia* is impetuosity, while another is weakness. For the weak person deliberates, but then his feeling makes him abandon the result of his deliberation; but the impetuous person is led on by his feelings because he has not deliberated.³³

³⁰It is the focus on ignorance that has led most interpreters to deny that, for Aristotle, we can be aware that we are acting against our best judgement at the moment of action. See for example Bostock 2000, Moss 2009, Wiggins 1978, Cook Wilson 1879 (see Bostock 2000, pp. 125 ff. for a fuller list). Some exceptions are David Charles in his Charles 2009, Charles 2007, and Charles 1984, Dahl 1984, Ch. 11 and Broadie 1991, pp. 266 ff.

³¹See ch. 6 for some arguments in favour of the view that the akratic's ignorance does not necessarily entail the impossibility of being aware of one's *akrasia* at the moment of action.

³²καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀκρατῆς εἰδῶς ὅτι φαῦλα πράττει διὰ πάθος, ὁ δ' ἐγκρατῆς εἰδῶς ὅτι φαῦλαι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ διὰ τὸν λόγον. *NE 1145b12–14*.

³³ἀκρασίας δὲ τὸ μὲν προπέτεια τὸ δ' ἀσθένεια. οἱ μὲν γὰρ βουλευσάμενοι οὐκ ἐμμένουσιν ὡς ἐβουλεύσαντο διὰ τὸ πάθος, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ βουλευσασθαι ἄγονται ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους. *NE 1150b20–24*. See Charles 2009 on this difference between weak akratics and impetuous akratics.

The impetuous akratic is someone who doesn't even engage in rational deliberation. The weak akratic, however, deliberates, and gets to the end of the deliberation (note the aorist *ebouleusanto*).³⁴ Thus, she concludes that it'd overall be best for her not to act akratically. Yet, she acts on a non-rational desire against this conclusion. As David Charles has argued, what Aristotle tells us about weak akratics strongly suggests that these akratics can be aware that they are acting akratically.³⁵ Akratics who do manage to go through a practical syllogism are aware of its premisses, and of the inferential connection between the premisses:

When someone has the universal [sc. belief] hindering him from tasting, and he has the second [sc. belief] that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet (and this is active), but it happens that desire (*epithumia*) is present, then [sc. the belief] says to avoid this, but the desire leads.³⁶

In virtue of their knowledge of the premisses, akratics like the one described in this passage get to a rational conclusion, in this case the conclusion that this sweet is overall bad and should be avoided. Then, a desire leads them on. This suggests, at least at first sight, that these akratics do not act entirely blindly. They are aware that the apparently unqualified pleasantness of the sweet is in fact qualified, for the sweet is in fact sickly. Yet, in what immediately follows, we discover that akratics fail to know the “last proposition”:

Since the last proposition is a belief about something perceptible and it is in charge of action, this is the one that the person who is in this *pathos* doesn't have, or the way he has it is not knowledge of it, but merely saying the words like the drunk who says the words of Empedocles.³⁷

If this passage applies to the weak akratic too, then the last proposition, of which the akratic lacks knowledge, must be the conclusion. As we know from Aristotle's account,

³⁴See also *NE* 1151a5–7, *NE* 1111b13–16, where Aristotle argues that akratics act against their decision.

³⁵See especially Charles 2007, pp. 195 ff. on this point.

³⁶ὅταν οὖν ἡ μὲν καθόλου ἐνῆ καλύουσα γεύεσθαι, ἡ δὲ, ὅτι πᾶν γλυκὸν ἡδύ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκὺ (αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ), τύχη δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα, ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει. *NE* 1147a30–b1. The feminine and the suggestion that it is somehow “in” the thinker imply that the subject of καλύουσα is belief, *doxa*. The οὖν at *NE* 1147a33 signals that the akratic draws the conclusion (*contra* Hardie 1980, p. 283 and Pickavé and Whiting 2008, p. 360 fn. 59, who suggest that Aristotle here only means to say that the premisses entail the conclusion, and not that the akratic gets to the conclusion).

³⁷ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην ἡ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὄν, ἡ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν ὥσπερ ὁ οἰνωμένος τὰ Ἐμπεδοκλέους. *NE* 1147b10–15.

the weak akratic deliberates and gets to the end of the deliberation, which implies that she grasps the major and minor premisses and puts them together. The question that this passage raises, then, is how the akratic can fail to know the conclusion, if she knows the premisses and can draw a correct inference.³⁸

On the basis of what Aristotle tells us here about the weak akratic's deliberation, it is hard to explain in what sense she can fail to know the conclusion. She knows the premisses, and she knows how to draw an inference, which suggests that she should know the conclusion too. It is even more difficult to defend the view that akratic is *unaware* of the conclusion. It is hard to see how one's *awareness* that the conclusion follows from the premisses can be knocked over when one's awareness of the premisses and the inferential connection between them remains intact. Aristotle's own account of the weak akratic's reasoning is unable to explain how this very selective lack of awareness would arise.³⁹

This suggests that even if Aristotle says that akratics lack *knowledge* of the conclusion of the correct practical syllogism, this shouldn't be taken to imply that they are *unaware* of the conclusion.⁴⁰ The weak akratic's alleged lack of awareness is very hard to square with the description of her reasoning in general. On the contrary, Aristotle's description of the weak akratic's reasoning supports the suggestion that she can be aware that she is acting against her best judgement.⁴¹

In addition, the possibility of the akratic's self-awareness is restated a few lines later, where the akratic is compared to the vicious person:

³⁸In this discussion, I follow especially Charles 2007. For the thesis that the last proposition is the conclusion see Charles 2009. Contra Charles see e.g. Price 2011, p. 295 fn. 35, Price rightly points out that it is odd for Aristotle to call the conclusion *teleutaia protasis*, when he has a term for conclusion which he has used a few lines earlier: *sumperasma*. Despite this terminological issue, the last *protasis* must be the conclusion: Aristotle here allows that some akratics (the impetuous ones at least) are unaware of the last proposition or fail to grasp it. If this proposition were the minor, however, the kind of ignorance these akratics would have would prevent them from being aware that, say, what they are eating is something sweet. But this kind of ignorance is precisely the kind that would make the akratic's action non-voluntary, which is a conclusion Aristotle explicitly wants to avoid (see especially Pickavé and Whiting 2008, p 335 on this point). On the idea that the akratic acts voluntarily see *NE* 1152a5–17. See *NE* 1110b18–1111a2 on the suggestion that being unaware of particulars renders one's actions non-voluntary but not necessarily unworthy of blame.

³⁹This problem applies, it seems to me, even to accounts in which the desire undermines the conclusion of the practical syllogism only at the moment of action (see Moss 2009). Why should the akratic's desire prevent her from seeing the conclusion that follows from the premisses she still grasps, while leaving her awareness of other features of her predicament intact?

⁴⁰On this point see also Dahl 1984, ch. 11 and Müller 2015a, esp. pp. 21 ff.

⁴¹This suggests that Aristotle allowed for one form of clear-eyed *akrasia*, but does not entail that he thought all forms of clear-eyed *akrasia* possible. As I argue in chapter 6.4, Aristotle thinks that akratics can be aware that they are acting against their best judgements, but he does not think that they understand the correct reason why their action is bad.

An agent is not aware of his vice, whereas he is of his *akrasia*.⁴²

In this passage, the vicious person's awareness of his condition is compared with the akratic person's awareness of his condition. The passage is the conclusion of a short paragraph in which vice is described as a general and continuous bad condition, while *akrasia* is described as being only intermittently bad. The point of Aristotle's remark that *akrasia* doesn't escape notice, then, might be that the akratic, unlike the vicious, can be aware of her condition when she is not acting akratically. When the akratic episode is over, she regains awareness of the badness of her desires, and thereby of her akratic condition.

If this were the right interpretation, however, it would contradict many of Aristotle's remarks on vice and vicious people. At *NE* 1114a11–20, he considers the possibility of unjust agents wishing to be just, and he explains that mere wishes to be just do not make us just.⁴³ This suggests that at least some vicious people can be aware of their bad condition in general, and wish they weren't bad. Similarly, Aristotle's view that vicious people are full of regrets seems to be based on the assumption that they can be aware of their bad condition.⁴⁴

While the possibility of awareness of their condition seems open to at least some vicious people, being rationally aware that they are acting on a false evaluative appearance is certainly precluded to all of them. This is because the vicious person has to act on a decision and, at least at the moment of action, thinks it is best to pursue each excessive pleasure she pursues.⁴⁵ The difference between akratics and vicious people is not that only akratics can be aware of their state, or their condition in general. Rather, the reason why *akrasia* does not escape notice is that akratics do not act on their decisions, and therefore can be aware that they are acting wrongly at the moment of action. One of the differences between *akrasia* and vice, then, lies in the fact that akratics can be aware of that their actions are bad while they act.⁴⁶

⁴²ἡ μὲν γὰρ κακία λανθάνει, ἡ δ' ἀκρασία οὐ λανθάνει. *NE* 1150b36.

⁴³Note that at *NE* 1114a13–14 Aristotle uses a future more vivid conditional (ἐάν plus subjunctive in the protasis plus future indicative in the apodosis), thus indicating that he considers the possibility of the unjust person wishing to be just a likely one, though of course an irrational one from the unjust person's perspective: οὐ μὴν ἐάν γε βούληται, ἄδικος ὦν παύσεται καὶ ἔσται δίκαιος.

⁴⁴*NE* 1166b6–13. This passage is less conclusive than *NE* 1114a11–20, for the vicious persons' regrets (*metameleiai*) don't necessarily stem from the awareness that she is in a bad condition, but might be related to the fact that her life turns out not to be as pleasant as she hoped. See further Irwin 2001, pp. 89 and ff. and Müller 2015b.

⁴⁵*NE* 1146b19–24, *NE* 1148a4–11, *NE* 1150a16–22, *NE* 1151a5–10, *NE* 1152a5–6.

⁴⁶*NE* 1151a10–15.

We find further textual evidence for this kind of self-aware *akrasia* in the *Eudemian Ethics* and in *De Anima*. The *Eudemian Ethics* is especially clear about akratic people being aware of the badness of their action at the time of action:

Further, there is both pleasure and pain in both; for the enkratic feels pain now in acting against his appetite, but has the pleasure of hope, i.e. that he will be later benefited, or even the pleasure of being presently benefited because he is healthy; while the akratic is pleased at getting through his *akrasia* what he desires, but has a pain of expectation, thinking that he is doing ill.⁴⁷

In this passage, both the enkratic and the akratic are characterized as being to some extent pained and to some extent pleased at the moment of action. The akratic in particular is pleased to satisfy her desire, but she is pained because she thinks she is acting badly, and her action leads to future pains. In order to be pained by the upcoming bad consequences of her action at the moment of action, the akratic needs to be aware that the action is bad.

Later in the same treatise, *akrasia* is contrasted with virtue:

The good man never finds fault with himself at the moment of his act (*hama*), like the akratic, nor the later with the earlier man, like the regretting one, nor the earlier with the later, like the liar.⁴⁸

Here, the contrast is between people who never reproach themselves, and people who sometimes do. Good people never find fault with themselves. Regretting people find fault with their past actions, and liars with their future actions.⁴⁹ Akratics find fault with themselves *at the moment of action*. This is because, presumably, they are aware that they are doing something which is overall bad.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ἔτι καὶ ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ἐν ἀμφοτέροις ἔνεστι. καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἐγκρατευόμενος λυπεῖται παρὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν πράττων ἤδη, καὶ χαίρει τὴν ἀπ' ἐλπίδος ἡδονήν, ὅτι ὕστερον ὠφελήθησεται, ἢ καὶ ἤδη ὠφελεῖται ὑγιαίνων· καὶ ὁ ἀκρατῆς χαίρει μὲν τυγχάνων ἀκρατευόμενος οὐ ἐπιθυμεί, λυπεῖται δὲ τὴν ἀπ' ἐλπίδος λύπην, οἶεται γὰρ κακὸν πράττειν. *EE* 1224b15–20.

⁴⁸ὁ δ' ἀγαθὸς οὐθ' ἅμα λαιδορεῖται ἑαυτῷ, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀκρατῆς, οὔτε ὁ ὕστερος τῷ πρότερον, ὥσπερ ὁ μεταμελητικὸς, οὔτε ὁ ἔμπροσθεν τῷ ὕστερον, ὥσπερ ὁ ψεύστης. *EE* 1240b21–24.

⁴⁹It is difficult to see why liars are in this condition, perhaps it is because they know they won't fulfil their promises, or because they fear their lies will be discovered.

⁵⁰Another possibility would be that akratics find fault with themselves at the moment of action only in so far as they can say that they are doing something wrong without really meaning it. But reading this passage alongside *EE* 1224b15–20 (above) strongly suggests that the akratic is convinced that she is acting badly, to the point that she finds acting akratically painful. Accounting for these remarks about self-aware *akrasia* is very difficult for those who think that Aristotle thought it impossible, see e.g. Price 1995, pp. 139 who resorts to saying that here Aristotle is lapsing into common sense.

Similarly, being aware that we are acting against our best judgement seems possible in the psychological works. At *DA* 433a1 ff., Aristotle explains that we can consider neither rational nor non-rational cognition decisive for action in cases of evaluative cognitive conflict:

Even if thought (*nous*) gives the order and reasoning (*dianoia*) says to pursue or avoid something, one doesn't move, but acts according to desire, like the akratic man ... but neither is desire decisive for movement: the enkratics, although they desire and have appetites, do not do the things that their desire command, but listen to thought.⁵¹

This passage describes what appears to be a case of knowingly acting against one's best judgement (*akrasia*), and contrasts it to acting in accordance to one's best judgement (*enkrateia*). The case involves the conflict between the commands of thought (*dianoia*) and the commands of a recalcitrant desire. The akratic is said to follow desires despite what thought says, and the enkratic is depicted as listening to thought's commands against the command of desire. The action, in both cases, seems to occur at the same time as the command is issued, whether or not it follows the command. The implication is that the akratic goes against what thought says, she disobeys thought, and she does so knowingly. Hence, the fact that thought declares the cognitive basis of her non-rational desires false is not enough to regulate her action.

There is, however, one passage in *De Anima* which can be taken to imply that declaring an appearance false is always sufficient to prevent one from acting on it: *DA* 429a4–8. This passage comes before the one I quoted above, and it is the ending remark of a long and controversial discussion about *phantasia*, in which Aristotle distinguishes it from perception and belief. The closing line of this discussion concerns the relationship between *phantasia*, rational cognition, human action and non-human action (or locomotion):

Since [sc. *phantasiai*] remain in us and are similar to perceptions, animals do many things in accordance with them, some because they do not have thought, like the beasts, others because sometimes thought is obscured by illnesses, sleep or emotions, like humans.⁵²

⁵¹ἔτι καὶ ἐπιπάττοντος τοῦ νοῦ καὶ λεγούσης τῆς διανοίας φεύγειν τι ἢ διώκειν, οὐ κινεῖται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν πράττει, οἷον ὁ ἀκρατής. ... ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἡ ὄρεξις ταύτης κυρία τῆς κινήσεως· οἱ γὰρ ἐγκρατεῖς ὀρεγόμενοι καὶ ἐπιθυμοῦντες οὐ πράττουσιν ὧν ἔχουσι τὴν ὄρεξιν, ἀλλ' ἀκολουθοῦσι τῷ νῷ. *DA* 433a1–8.

⁵²καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐμμένειν καὶ ὁμοίας εἶναι ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι, πολλὰ κατ' αὐτάς πράττει τὰ ζῶα, τὰ μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν νοῦν, οἷον τὰ θηρία, τὰ δὲ διὰ τὸ ἐπικαλύπτεσθαι τὸν νοῦν ἐνίοτε πάθει ἢ νόσῳ ἢ ὕπνῳ, οἷον οἱ ἄνθρωποι. *DA* 429a4–8.

Here, Aristotle argues that we act on perceptual appearances when thought is obscured by bodily affections like sleep, emotions or illnesses. This passage can be taken to imply that humans, in case of cognitive conflict, only ever act on the basis of *phantasia* when thought, or rational cognition, is somehow disabled or covered over. From now on, I will call this the *strong interpretation*.⁵³ According to the strong interpretation, this is a concise but exhaustive explanation of why humans act on non-rational cognition against rational cognition. If there is a conflict between thought and perception or *phantasia*, we only act against thought if thought is clouded. If thought declares the appearance false, we won't act on it.

A *weaker interpretation* is, however, available: one in which this passage simply mentions a case in which humans do not act on their rational cognition in case of cognitive conflict, without being exhaustive. The temporary disablement of the capacity to scrutinise appearances might be one of the reasons why humans act on *phantasiai* against thought. But it needn't be the *only* reason. Do we have any grounds to prefer the weaker interpretation and argue that Aristotle is simply suggesting an example, rather than making a general claim?

We have at least two reasons to prefer the weaker interpretation. First, if this claim does not generalise to all evaluative cognitive conflicts, then it is consistent with the texts that allow for the possibility of being aware that one is acting badly at the moment of action. Second, this claim is unlikely to have a very wide scope because here Aristotle has not yet given his full account of the relationship between cognition and action. The relationship between cognition and action, or cognition and locomotive motion, is analysed later in the text, from *DA* 432a15 onwards.⁵⁴ In particular, at *De Anima* 429a4–9, the relationship between evaluative cognition, desire formation and action has not yet been introduced.

De Anima suggests that we act on false appearances against thought because or when thought is clouded. The very same treatise as well as other treatises give us reason to think that this thesis is limited to cases of non-evaluative cognitive conflict. In that context, declaring an appearance false is always enough to prevent us from acting on it. I showed in this section, however, that declaring an evaluative appearance false is not always sufficient to prevent us from acting on it. Hence, the action regulating powers of practical thought in case of evaluative conflict differ from its action regulating powers in case of non-evaluative conflict.

⁵³This interpretation is defended by Moss 2009, pp. 132 ff.

⁵⁴There is a brief preliminary discussion at *DA* 431a10–17, which concerns first and foremost the relation between rational and non-rational evaluative cognition and desires.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Aristotle includes in the category of practical cognition any kind of cognition which has action (or purposive movement) as an end in view. Thus, practical cognition includes evaluative, non-evaluative, rational and non-rational cognition. I then looked at how practical cognition regulates human action in case of evaluative and in case of non-evaluative cognitive conflict.

My analysis suggests that there is an important difference between cases of evaluative cognitive conflict and cases non-evaluative cognitive conflict. In both contexts, non-rational appearances can persist even when rational cognition declares them false. However, declaring a perceptual appearance false always prevents us from acting on it only in the non-evaluative case.

In the non-evaluative case, practical cognition discriminates between truth and false appearances, thereby regulating action and preventing us from acting on what we take to be false. In the evaluative case, these activities are not always sufficient to regulate action and desire. This discrepancy in the functioning of rational practical cognition is especially important for a study of Aristotle's peculiarly human cognitive psychology. Practically relevant cognitive conflicts are specific to the human psychological make-up because animals lack a rational part and divinities lack a non-rational part. In order to understand the peculiarly human link between practical cognition and behaviour, it is therefore useful to look into how cognitive conflict issues into action. If my argument in this chapter is persuasive, understanding the connection between human practical cognition and action is especially difficult in case of conflict between evaluative appearances. In these cases, assessing truth and falsity of the appearances is not an effective way to regulate behaviour.

With the aim to reconstruct how human practical cognition engages with evaluative appearances, in chapter 4 I look at the special connection between evaluative cognition and desires. I argue that once this connection is made clear, we can see why we sometimes act on evaluative appearances we take to be false. In chapter 6, I argue that for Aristotle generating correct actions and desires is the task of a virtuous state of rational practical cognition: *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom.

Chapter 4

Evaluative Cognition & Desires

4.1 Introduction

Aristotle is a cognitivist about desires.¹ He believes that when we desire something we also see it in a favourable light. We cognise it as good, as pleasant or as possessing other positive evaluative features. The specific focus of this chapter is on the relationship he envisages between human evaluative cognition and desires.² I look at three different types of evaluative cognition (intellectual, phantastic and perceptual cognition) and at the relationship between each type of cognition and desire. I argue that perceptual evaluative cognition is intrinsically desiderative, while intellectual and phantastic evaluative cognition are causally connected with desires only when they are not produced by the thinker (or by the perceiver) at will.

This account has important implications for Aristotle's ethics: it entails that, in order to become virtuous, we need to eliminate and not merely to contradict the involuntary false evaluative appearances that cause vicious desires. This account

¹The fact that Aristotle is a cognitivist about desires is quite uncontroversial, what seems controversial is exactly what kind of cognitivist he is. To the best of my knowledge, Klaus Corcilius is the only author who gets close to denying that Aristotle is a cognitivist about desires in his Corcilius 2011.

²Aristotle's account of the relationship between evaluative cognition and desires (*orexeis*) is obviously connected to his account of the relationship between evaluative cognition and emotions (*pathē*) in general. Desires are often presented as belonging to the category of emotions—consider e.g. *NE* 1111b1–2 and *EE* 1220b12–14, where *epithumia* and *thumos* are called emotions (*pathē*)—. A full analysis of Aristotle's view on the emotions lies outside the scope of this chapter, which might however set its basis. The role of emotions in Aristotle's ethics can hardly be downplayed, but the account of the relationship between cognition and emotions is to a large extent parasitic on the account of the relationship between cognition and desires. Aristotle takes most emotions to be desire-involving (consider for example anger as a desire for retaliation in *Rhet.* 1378a30–31). In addition, he never discusses the cognitive basis of emotions at length in his psychological works, but presents his views on these matters mostly in the *Rhetoric*. His views on emotions in the *Rhetoric*, however, can be seen as representing his considered cognitive account of the emotions only if they are compatible with his account of affections in general in *De Anima*.

has important consequences for Aristotle's moral psychology too: it suggests that Aristotle treated the irrationality of conflicts of desires as different in nature from the irrationality of conflicts of beliefs. In addition, it sheds further light on why sometimes we act on false evaluative non-rational appearances even when we are aware of their falsity. Being aware that an evaluative appearance is false doesn't always prevent it from causing a desire to act. For this reason, thought's capacity to scrutinise and declare evaluative appearances false can't always regulate actions *or* desires to act.

4.2 Evaluative Perception and Desires

Aristotle often suggests that we can grasp evaluatively charged features perceptually. In particular, we can perceive things as pleasant, or as painful.³ Evaluative perception is not only possible, but also connected to bodily changes and desires. For example, the perception of something as pleasant is accompanied by a desire to pursue it and by some physical changes (heating).⁴

This preliminary characterization doesn't clarify the relationship between a given evaluative perception and its corresponding desire. Do they merely happen to coincide? As I argue below, *De Anima* gives us reason to answer this question negatively. Evaluative perceptions and their corresponding desires are necessarily related: they are different descriptions of the same mental events.⁵

At *De Anima* 434b15, Aristotle argues that without perception animals would be incapable of pursuit and avoidance. Hence, perception is necessary for animal desires. The kind of perception that is necessary for desire is evaluative perception, or perception of things as pleasant and painful. Desires are the final cause of an animal's basic capacity to taste what is pleasant and what is painful:

[sc. animals] have taste because of the pleasant and the painful, so that they can perceive it [i.e. the pleasant or painful] in food and desire and

³See *inter alia* *NE* 1149a35–36. The view that perception can grasp evaluative features like pleasantness and painfulness is widespread. It is more controversial whether perception can grasp evaluative features other than pleasantness and painfulness, such as for example goodness or advantageousness. According to Moss 2012, p. 5 and Ch. 1, 2, 3 it can, according to Irwin 1988a, pp. 330–333 it cannot. For the sake of my argument in this chapter it does not matter whether we can perceive goodness, fineness or advantageousness (see Chapter 5 for further discussion of these issues). All that matters is that according to Aristotle we can perceive the simplest evaluative feature, i.e. pleasantness.

⁴*De Motu* 701b1ff.

⁵My argument is indebted to and closely follows Charles 2006.

move ...⁶

Animals have perception of evaluative features so that they can have desires. Hence, evaluative perception is what enables them to have at least basic desires for food and drink. Evaluative perception does not merely happen to coincide with these basic animal desires, but it is necessary for them.

Another passage of *De Anima* gives us reason to make this connection even stronger. It suggests that a given evaluative perception is not merely necessary for its corresponding desire, but it is in fact the same mental event as the desire, only under a different description:⁷

[T1] (a) Perceiving is analogous to simply saying and thinking. Whenever something is pleasant or painful, [sc. perception] as if affirming or denying, avoids or pursues: and feeling pleasure and pain is being active with the perceptual mean towards the good or bad as such. And this is what pursuit and avoidance are in actuality, and the faculty or avoidance and the faculty of pursuit are not different from each other or from the perceptual faculty, although they are different in being. (b) The thinking soul uses the representations of *phantasia* (*phantasmata*) like [sc. perception uses] perceptions, and when it says or denies that they are good or bad, it pursues or avoids: for this reason the soul never thinks without *phantasmata*.⁸

This passage discusses the relationship between perception of pleasure and pain and desire (and avoidance). It has been the source of many controversies, two of

⁶γεῦσιν δὲ διὰ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ λυπηρόν, ἵνα αἰσθάνηται τὸ ἐν τροφῇ καὶ ἐπιθυμῇ καὶ κινῆται ... *DA* 435b22–25, see also *Sens.* 436b15–19 for the same point.

⁷See Charles 2006, Tuozzo 1994, Whiting 2002b, p. 173 ff. and Achtenberg 2002, p. 163 ff. My interpretation relies on Charles' view with regards to the relationship between evaluative perception and desires, but is different from it with regards to the relationship between intellectual cognition and desires.

⁸(a) τὸ μὲν οὖν αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅμοιον τῷ φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν· ὅταν δὲ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν, οἷον καταφᾶσα ἢ ἀποφᾶσα διώκει ἢ φεύγει· καὶ ἔστι τὸ ἥδεσθαι καὶ λυπεῖσθαι τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τῇ αἰσθητικῇ μεσότητι πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν, ἢ τοιαῦτα· καὶ ἡ φυγή δὲ καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις τοῦτο, ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν, καὶ οὐχ ἕτερον τὸ ὄρεκτικόν καὶ τὸ φευκτικόν, οὐτ' ἀλλήλων οὔτε τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ· ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι ἄλλο. (b) τῇ δὲ διανοητικῇ ψυχῇ τὰ φαντάσματα οἷον αἰσθήματα ὑπάρχει, ὅταν δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν φήσῃ ἢ ἀποφήσῃ, φεύγει ἢ διώκει· διὸ οὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἢ ψυχῆ. *DA* 431a8–17. Reading φυγή δὲ καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις τοῦτο I follow Tuozzo 1994, p. 536 and Achtenberg 2002, p. 163 ff. If one reads *tauto* instead of *touto*, the case for the interpretation I defend below can still be made. The identity between avoidance and pursuit in actuality can be explained in light of the fact that both pursuit and avoidance are after all activities of the perceptual mean (see Charles 2006, fn. iii). An alternative interpretation would consist in suggesting that pursuit and avoidance are the same in actuality in so far as pursuing x can be described as avoiding not x, and avoiding x as pursuing not x. This interpretation would, it seems to me, make the remark trivial (see below for discussion). I thank Paolo Fait for pointing the alternative interpretation out to me, an analogue can be found in Hamlyn 1968, p. 146.

which are related to the connection between evaluative perception and desire. The first controversy is about whether or not the passage is concerned with *evaluative* perception at all. The second is about the relationship between perception and desire.

Let's begin with evaluative perception. In T1 (a), Aristotle focuses on perception of pleasant or painful things as well as good or bad things. However, he doesn't specify that they are perceptually grasped *as* good, bad, pleasant or painful. Klaus Corcilius takes this to suggest that the passage does not involve evaluative perception.⁹ This interpretation, however, seems to me implausible for both exegetical and philosophical reasons.

The exegetical reasons have to do with the fact that Aristotle in this passage (and arguably in *DA III. 7* as a whole) is proposing a complex analogy between thought, perception and language. The analogy contrasts the case in which we merely think, perceive or mention something to the case in which we say something about it, perceive it as having a good or bad quality, or think of it as having a good or bad quality. If the passage is taken not to involve perceptual grasp of something *as* having positive or negative evaluative features, the whole analogy between the linguistic, intellectual and perceptual case unexpectedly breaks down.¹⁰

The philosophical reasons have to do with the fact that denying that perceptual evaluative cognition is involved in the formation of desires has implausible consequences for Aristotle's theory of animal purposive motion. If Aristotle really thought that animals can't perceive things *as* pleasant, it would have been hard for him to account for the difference between plants growing toward a source of water and animals looking for a pond when they are thirsty. Similarly, it would have been hard to account for the fact that sometimes animals are mistaken about what they take to be good or bad for them.¹¹

⁹See Corcilius 2011, p. 123 and ff. If his interpretation were right, it would follow that perception can cause desires, but it is under no circumstance identical to desires. Only evaluative perceptions are viable candidates to be another description of the same mental events as desires: otherwise, all perceptions would be intrinsically desiderative.

¹⁰And so does any attempt to see *DA III. 7* as having a unified structure, and as elucidating the intellectual case in *DA 432b1–12* and *DA 431a15–18* in light of the perceptual case in *DA 431a1–15*. For the view that *DA III. 7* is not a mere collection of fragments and is intended to elucidate evaluative thought in light of evaluative perception see Osborne 1998. See Burnyeat 2001, p. 72 for the thesis that *DA III. 7* has a folder-like, chiasmic structure.

¹¹Corcilius 2011, pp. 138 ff. responds to the second objection, but not the first. His response, however, strikes me as implausible. It relies on a distinction between what is naturally good or bad for an animal and what is ethically or rationally good for an animal. Thus, an animal, especially when its nature is "corrupted", can pursue what is capable of maintaining its physical condition (and therefore naturally good for it), while failing to pursue what is really good for it. This distinction between natural goodness and ethical goodness for non-human animals, however, seems to me speculative and not supported by the text.

Hence, Aristotle in T1(a) has in mind *evaluative* perception. In light of this clarification, we can proceed to the second controversial topic: the relationship between perception and desires. The text, it seems to me, does not merely support the thesis that evaluative perceptions are necessary and sufficient conditions for their corresponding desires. More precisely, it supports the thesis that evaluative perceptions are identical with their corresponding desires. Evaluative perception is intrinsically desiderative, and the same mental event can be described equivalently as “desiring x” or “seeing x as pleasant”. The passage arrives at this thesis by means of a progression: first it suggests that feeling pleasure and pain is the same as being perceptually active toward the good or bad (or pleasant or painful); then it suggests that in actuality desire and avoidance are the same as, respectively, being perceptually active toward the good or bad, or the pleasant and the painful. Being perceptually active toward the good or bad, or the pleasant and the painful presumably means, in this context, perceiving something as good, bad, pleasant or painful. From this series of equivalences, it follows that perceiving something as pleasant is the same as desiring it.¹²

This account of T1(a) is based on two textual assumptions: first, that the qualification “as such” (*hei toiauton*) in the phrase “feeling pleasure is being perceptually active toward the good as such” signals that the perception is of something *as* pleasant, or *as* good. This assumption is supported by the view that this passage is concerned with evaluative perception.

The second assumption is that the textual variant *touto* has to be preferred to *tauto* at *DA* 431a13–14. If *tauto* were the correct variant, the line would suggest that actual pursuit and actual avoidance are identical with each other, as opposed to being respectively identical with feeling pleasure and pain. This alternative, however, encumbers the passage with a trivial point, i.e. that pursuing something can be described in terms of avoiding its absence, and vice versa. The point would be trivial even in light of what comes next, for it is not sufficient to support the further claim that the faculty of pursuit and the faculty of avoidance are the same as the perceptual faculty. It is not even necessary (though it might be sufficient) to prove that the faculty of pursuit and the faculty of avoidance are the same. As we know from the account of perception and *phantasia*, two faculties can be identified even when the products of their activities do not coincide: though perception and *phantasia* are the same but different in being, the active operations of *phantasia* are distinct and merely causally related to the active operations of perception. In *On Dreams*, the *phantasiai* that

¹²My arguments here and in the following two paragraphs follow very closely Charles 2006.

appear in our dreams are not themselves perceptions, but are caused or generated by sense perceptions.¹³

T1(a) suggests that evaluative perception doesn't merely happen to coincide with desires. An evaluative perception and its corresponding desire are in fact necessarily related, for they are two descriptions of the same mental event. Perceiving something as pleasant is the same as pursuing it, and perceiving something as painful is the same as avoiding it. Hence, perceptual evaluative cognition is intrinsically desiderative. For this reason, there is no circumstance under which an evaluative perception can be isolated from or found in absence of its corresponding desire.

This view, if considered in the specific context in which it is developed, is not implausible.¹⁴ Often, when Aristotle discusses evaluative perceptions and desires, he has in mind basic desires for food and drink in connection with the most basic senses (touch or taste).¹⁵ Characterizing a desire for a certain food, say, in terms of the tasting it as pleasant and vice versa seems a very economical way of accounting for the basic reaction any animal has when it comes in perceptual contact with something it likes. It will be pleased, and it will be attracted to whatever it is that is pleasing it. The same account can be extended to distal senses like sight and hearing. Even if the objects of sight and hearing are at a distance, we can enter in perceptual contact with them, grasp them as pleasant, and thereby be attracted to them.

Nonetheless, the idea that perceiving something as pleasant is the same as taking pleasure in it and as desiring it cannot be generalised to desires that require envisaging prospects.¹⁶ First, desires for prospective pleasures are often desires for things that we see ourselves as *lacking* or *needing*. Hence, they are often accompanied by pain,

¹³ *Insomn.* 459a15-20, *DA* 428b11-429a10.

¹⁴ See however G. Pearson 2011, sec. 7.

¹⁵ See the passages above, especially *DA* 435b22-25, and also *Sens.* 436b15-19.

¹⁶ Here I follow in particular Lorenz 2006, p. 140 ff. who defends the view that *phantasia* is required for locomotive desires. G. Pearson 2012, p. 44 ff. argues that *phantasia* is required for all desires, for all desires require the desirer to envisage prospects or counterfactual scenarios. Pearson's view is however in tension with the analysis of *DA* 431a8-17 above. In addition, it relies on the assumption that even desires to continue an activity one is already engaging in require envisaging a prospect or a counter-factual scenario (G. Pearson 2012, p. 42 ff.). This assumption seems to me unwarranted, especially in light of Aristotle's view that pleasures proper to an activity are inseparable from it and sustain it, whereas alien pleasures destroy it (see *NE* 1153a21-23 and *NE* 1175b23 ff.). Presumably, the pleasure proper to an activity (studying, for example, but also lower level activities like watching a sunset, or eating), especially in so far as it sustains it and prolongs it, will generate a desire to continue engaging in it. Such desires will be separable in time and nature from the activity (*NE* 1175b31-32), but they won't be *for* a different prospective activity. If they were, they would distract us from the current activity, as opposed to encouraging us to continue engaging in it. See also Schofield 2011 for a defence of the view that *phantasia* is not necessary for all desires even in *De Motu*.

and not pleasure.¹⁷ Second, these desires require us to imagine a prospective pleasure different from the one that our current perception can afford us, although it may make us aware of its availability: the scent of a meal can make us aware of its availability, but what we desire is the prospect of tasting the meal, not (or not only) smelling its scent.¹⁸ For this reason, even though evaluative perception is for Aristotle intrinsically conative, it cannot account for desires which require envisaging a prospect. Hence his suggestion that desires generally require *phantasia*.¹⁹

4.3 Evaluative Thought and Desires

Evaluative perception and desires are intimately connected. Evaluative perception is intrinsically desiderative, and perceptual desires are intrinsically evaluative. Thus, for example, “desiring to eat the piece of cake” and “perceiving the piece of cake as pleasant” can be two descriptions of the same mental event.

Even if this account is right for the case of evaluative perception, whether it can be applied to other forms of evaluative cognition is still an open question. Aristotle believes that intellectual and phantastic evaluative cognitions are, too, connected with desires. In order to analyse this connection, the natural place to start from is, once again, the account of evaluative perception and thought in *De Anima*.

We find a description of the relationship between intellectual evaluative cognition and desires right after the description of the relationship between perceptual evaluative cognition and desires in T1(a):

[T1](b) The thinking soul uses the representations of *phantasia* (*phantasmata*) like perceptions, and when it says or denies that they are good or bad, it pursues or avoids.²⁰

This is the intellectual analogue of the perceptual case discussed just before. In the intellectual case, the soul desires or avoids when thought declares its objects to be good or bad. The only explicit difference with the perceptual case is that thought needs and uses the representations of *phantasia* as perceptions. This difference between perception and thought is picked up again in the second comparison between the

¹⁷That Aristotle recognised this seems to be evident from his remarks on people who induce thirsts in themselves in order to seek a cure in restorative pleasures (*NE* 1154a27 ff.).

¹⁸See *NE* 1118a15 ff. on sight and smell making an animal aware of the pleasures of touch at a distance.

¹⁹*DA* 433b29 ff.

²⁰*DA* 431a8–17.

intellectual case and the perceptual case in *DA III. 7*. This passage clarifies a little in what way thought uses the representations of *phantasia*:

[T2] (a) The thinker thinks the forms in *phantasmata*, and in them, just as in perception, he determines the object of pursuit and avoidance, so even when he is not perceiving, i.e. when he is dealing with *phantasmata*, he is moved. (b) For example when one perceives the beacon because it is fire, one grasps with the common sense, seeing that it moves, that it is an alarm signal. (c) At other times one, as if seeing in the soul the thoughts and appearances, reasons and deliberates about the future in relation to the present. And when one pronounces [sc. that it is good or bad], just like there [sc. in the perceptual case] that it is pleasant or painful, here [sc. in the intellectual case] one pursues or avoids, and in general in the case of action.²¹

This passage recalls T1 both because it introduces a comparison between the perceptual case and the intellectual case, and also because of its structure. The comparison is introduced in T2(a) and it is restated in T2(c). Like T1, T2 starts with the perceptual case in T2(b) and only then proceeds to the intellectual case in T2(c). In both the intellectual and the perceptual case, Aristotle is interested in how the thinker (or the perceiver) goes about determining what to avoid or pursue. In the perceptual case, he uses a military example, in which a sentinel perceptually recognizes the alarm signal because he sees a moving fire.²² The suggestion that the sentinel's recognition is

²¹(a) τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ, καὶ ὡς ἐν ἐκείνοις ὄρισται αὐτῷ τὸ διωκτὸν καὶ φευκτὸν, καὶ ἐκτὸς τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ὅταν ἐπὶ τῶν φαντασμάτων ἦ, κινεῖται· (b) οἷον, αἰσθανόμενος τὸν φρυκτὸν ὅτι πῦρ, τῇ κοινῇ ὀρῶν κινούμενον γνωρίζει ὅτι πολέμιος· (c) ὅτε δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φαντάσμασιν ἢ νοήμασιν, ὥσπερ ὀρῶν, λογίζεται καὶ βουλευέται τὰ μέλλοντα πρὸς τὰ παρόντα· καὶ ὅταν εἴπῃ ὡς ἐκεῖ τὸ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρὸν, ἐνταῦθα φεύγει ἢ διώκει· καὶ ὅλως ἐν πράξει. *DA* 431b2–10. The passage and its translation are very controversial. In (a) I take *noētikon* to be a synecdoche for the thinker (cf. Hamlyn 1968, p. 148). Correspondingly, I take *kineitai* to refer to the movement of the thinker caused by the desire, and not to the “desiderative affection” of the thinking faculty (*contra* Charles 2006, p. 18). This reading reflects the fact that Aristotle has in mind cases in which desires result in action or locomotion (cf. *DA* 431b10 on how the examples are representative of “the case of action in general”). In (b) I follow Gregoric 2007, pp. 116 and ff. and his suggestion that the common sense is responsible for the recognition of the alarm signal. In (c) I take *enthautai* and *ekei* to signal the contrast between what the intellectual case and the perceptual case (Following Hicks 1907, p. 143 and Hamlyn 1968, p. 148 *contra* Charles 2006, p. 18).

²²Here I follow Gregoric 2007, p. 117:

The reason why the interpreters tend to misconstrue this sentence is that they fail to see, or to take fully on board, that φρυκτὸς πολέμιος is an idiom referring to the alarm signal. When an ancient city expected a siege, torches were placed on visible spots around the city. They would remain steady for as long as there was no threat, but as soon as a threat was spotted, the sentry would swing the torches and thus warn the city

merely perceptual is made clear by the fact that the sentinel is called “the perceiver”. To describe the recognition, Aristotle uses a verb which does not presuppose rational cognition (*gnōrizein*) and he implies that the common sense (*koinē aisthēsis*) is responsible for the recognition of the alarm signal.²³

The intellectual case in T2(c) is an example of deliberation (*bouleusis*) and presents a thinker engaged into two tasks: first, it’s as if the thinker “saw” or visualised thoughts and *phantasmata*. Second, the thinker reasons about the future in relation to the present. Described in these terms, the thinker’s deliberative process is to some extent obscure. It is unclear exactly what role the visualised thoughts and *phantasiai* play, and it is not explicit what exactly reasoning and thinking about the future in relation to the present involve. In order to shed light on these issues, it is useful to look at this passage in combination with another passage whose focus is on the involvement of *phantasia* in deliberation:²⁴

[T3] Perceptual *phantasia*, as we have said, is found in the other animals, but the deliberative kind in reasoning animals—it is the task of reasoning to decide whether to do this or that: it is necessary to measure by a single standard, for one pursues the greater—so that they can combine many *phantasiai* into one.²⁵

Although the occurrence of unexplained technical terms such as perceptual (*aisthētikē*) and deliberative (*bouleutikē*) *phantasia* make this passage difficult to understand, it can I think shed light on deliberation. The task of deliberation, in this case, is to

of the threat. This would be called ‘the beacon of danger’ (ὁ φρυκτὸς πολέμιος), that is the alarm signal. If this fact is fully appreciated, it is clear that what the perceiver is said to realize is that something is the alarm signal, not that something belongs to the enemy. Since the adjective πολέμιος picks up the preceding τὸν φρυκτὸν, what the perceiver grasps is that the beacon seen to be moving is the alarm signal.

²³See Gregoric 2007, p. 121 and fn. 17. For the verb *gnōrizein* associated with perception see e.g. *DA* 409b26–32.

²⁴For a similar strategy and a similar account of the connection between the two passages, see Moss 2012, pp. 144 and ff. My account differs from Moss’ in so far as it doesn’t require deliberation to be hedonic and oriented at determining what is most pleasant. In *Topics III*, Aristotle gives the rules of measurement that can be applied to deliberative *calculi* of a non-hedonic nature. See also *Top.* 116b25 and *Top.* 118b30 for two specific instances of solving problematic cases of value measurement that recall the account of deliberation in *De Anima* (see below) and in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially *NE* 1112b15–20.

²⁵ἡ μὲν οὖν αἰσθητικὴ φαντασία, ὡς περ εἴρηται, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζώοις ὑπάρχει, ἡ δὲ βουλευτικὴ ἐν τοῖς λογιστικοῖς (πότερον γὰρ πράξει τόδε ἢ τόδε, λογισμοῦ ἤδη ἐστὶν ἔργον· καὶ ἀνάγκη ἐνὶ μετρεῖν· τὸ μείζον γὰρ διώκει·) ὥστε δύναται ἐν ἑκ πλειόνων φαντασμάτων ποιεῖν *DA* 434a5–10. I changed the punctuation to clarify that the consecutive subordinate introduced by *hōste* depends on the first sentence.

decide between more than one option (*tode ē tode*).²⁶ Deliberation measures by one standard, and it makes the deliberator pursue what is greater according to the chosen standard. The fact that deliberation is described as a kind of rational measurement by a single standard suggests that the deliberative calculus (the *logismos*) is in charge of both applying the standard and of measuring according to the standard. For example, if the deliberative calculus is used to determine what is the tastiest option, it will need to determine both whether and to what degree the options it is considering are tasty. Only when these operations are complete will the thinker be able to determine which option has the quality which is being measured to the greatest degree.

This deliberative calculus is strikingly reminiscent of the famous art of measurement (*metrikē technē*) in the *Protagoras*.²⁷ The art of measurement, in *De Anima* and in the *Protagoras*, seems to be aimed at determining both whether and to what extent something has a certain quality. In the *Protagoras*, the person who possesses this art can measure, in spite of potentially misleading appearances (*phantasiai*), exactly whether and to what extent an apparent pleasure is pleasant, thus determining which one is truly the most pleasant of a number of options.²⁸

In *De Anima*, the deliberator engages in a similar calculation, with a difference. The difference is that she doesn't apply the measuring only to appearances that happen to be present, or that call for deliberation because they are dubious. The deliberator calls to mind evaluative appearances and thoughts as if she were visualising them, and actively generates new options by combining several appearances into one.²⁹ This difference between Plato's account and Aristotle's is appropriate for the different contexts, and doesn't imply that the two authors have two different "arts of measurement" in mind. Aristotle in *De Anima*, unlike Plato in the *Protagoras*, is interested in deliberation in general and not merely in cases in which the deliberator has to assess the truth of potentially misleading appearances.

²⁶This does not entail, *per se*, that according to Aristotle deliberation requires the deliberator to assess different options, or even to think that different possibilities are available to her. However, it does suggest that for Aristotle evaluating different options is sometimes what deliberation is about or for. For the view that deliberation for Aristotle does not require weighing options, see Nielsen 2011, who however discusses the account of deliberation in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, and not in *De Anima*. For further discussion on the issues raised by Aristotle's account of deliberation see Cooper 1975 and Segvic 2011.

²⁷*Prot.* 356d ff.

²⁸For the view that the art of measurement also determines whether certain things possess a given evaluative feature, I follow Storey 2014.

²⁹See respectively T1, where the thinker is described as if seeing in her soul the thoughts and appearances, and the idea that deliberative *phantasia* is able to combine *phantasiai* into one.

Hence, in T2 and T3 the deliberator uses evaluative thoughts and *phantasiai* in order to see whether and to what extent different possible courses of actions possess a certain evaluative feature. She then calculates and measures which option has such feature to the highest degree, thus determining which is the best course of action according to the chosen single standard. Once she has determined what is best according to the chosen standard, she desires it, or pursues it.³⁰

This account of deliberation suggests that the connection between evaluative thoughts and desires differs from the connection between evaluative perceptions and desires. While evaluative perceptions are intrinsically desiderative, evaluative thoughts can't be, for there are some evaluative thoughts which are not sufficient to give rise to desires. Aristotle's deliberation requires imagining and thinking about the advantages of the different options, as well as determining which is the best one according to the chosen measuring standard. Only the option which is characterized as best, however, is described as being associated with a desire.³¹ The other evaluatively charged thoughts and appearances that the deliberator measures are not said to be accompanied by a desire.

There is a good reason why Aristotle considers the evaluative thoughts and *phantasiai* the deliberator actively produces in isolation from desires. What Aristotle has in mind is, I think, that deliberation and the assessment of the advantages of different options can be affectively detached. When we deliberate about what to do, we are not necessarily or immediately affected by a plethora of desires. Not all the options we characterise as good in deliberation are the cause of a desiderative response. The possibility of this kind of deliberative detachment is a preliminary indication that the connection between intellectual evaluative cognition and desires is looser than the connection between perceptual evaluative cognition and desires. The fact that we can contemplate evaluative thoughts when we deliberate without being affected by them suggests that not all evaluative thoughts are desire causing. Hence, evaluative thought is not always sufficient for desires, which entails that it is not intrinsically desiderative.

In addition, the view that evaluative intellectual cognition is intrinsically desiderative encounters some textual difficulties. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that intellectual evaluative cognition explains the presence of desires, and not vice versa:

[T4] The object of appetitive desire (*epithumia*) is the apparent fine, the object of wish is the really fine. We desire because it seems [fine], rather

³⁰Cf the use of *diōkein* at the end of both passages.

³¹See above (*DA* 434a5–10) where Aristotle writes that what is pursued is the greater.

than it seeming [fine] because we desire: thinking (*noēsis*) is the starting point: thought (*nous*) is moved by the intelligible (*noētou*).³²

Thought, in this passage, is the starting point: thought explains the presence of the (rational) desire, and the desire doesn't explain the presence of thought. But if evaluative thoughts explain the presence of desires, and not *vice versa*, evaluative thoughts and rational desires can't be two different descriptions of the same phenomenon.³³ Rational evaluative cognition is explanatorily basic, and therefore cannot merely be another description of the same event as the desire. However, it can cause (and thereby explain the presence of) the desire.

The upshot of this analysis of wish and of deliberation is that evaluative intellectual cognition can explain the presence of desires, and it can cause desires, although it does not do so necessarily, or under all circumstances. Hence, an evaluative thought and its corresponding desire can be two separate events related causally, but they are not two different descriptions of the same mental event.

This interpretation finds further support in the account of decision (*prohairesis*) in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For Aristotle, decision is a deliberative desire. Once we have deliberated, we judge that something would be best for us and, therefore, we desire to do it:

[T5] Since what is chosen is what is desired (among the things which are up to us) on the basis of deliberation, decision is deliberative desire for things which are up to us; for having judged (*krinantes*) through deliberation we desire in accordance with deliberation.³⁴

³²ἐπιθυμητὸν μὲν γὰρ τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν, βουλευτὸν δὲ πρῶτον τὸ ὄν καλόν. ὀρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι δοκεῖ [καλόν] μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ [καλόν] διότι ὀρεγόμεθα. ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἡ νόησις. νοῦς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κινεῖται. *Met.* 1072a27–30. Supplying *kalon* after *dokei* renders the passage more intelligible.

³³Charles discusses T4 in his Charles 2006, pp. 26–27. He argues that Aristotle's view might be that non-evaluative thought is the starting point because an object needs to be cognitively grasped in order to become an object of desire. This doesn't entail, however, that grasping the object of desire *as* good generates the desire. This interpretation, however, strikes me as implausible, because it makes it look as if Aristotle is making a trivial point. Aristotle emphasizes that thought, and not desire, is explanatorily basic. This may be controversial in the case of evaluative thought, but it seems a truism in the case of non-evaluative thought. It seems obviously true that in order to desire something we need to be in "cognitive contact" with it. Conversely, it seems obvious that the fact that we desire something doesn't explain why we are grasping it in thought. The second response to this objection proposed by Charles is that in T4 Aristotle isn't considering the relationship between evaluative thoughts and desires, but the relationship between the content of thoughts, thoughts and desires. Aristotle's view, then, would be that the content of thought is merely *explanatorily* basic. This response is more persuasive, but doesn't generalise to the case of decision discussed below.

³⁴προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν: ἐκ τοῦ βουλεύεσθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν. *NE* 1113a10–14.

In this passage, the moment at which we judge on the basis of deliberation is prior in time with respect to the moment at which the deliberative desire arises (note the use of the aorist *krinantes*). It seems natural to take the judgement that follows deliberation to be evaluative: for example, the judgement that it is best to act thus and so, or that it is best to avoid such and such, etc.³⁵ Hence, Aristotle’s account of decision, deliberation and desires suggests that intellectual evaluative cognition is not intrinsically desiderative. Rather, it causes desires and explains how desires arise.

Against this interpretation, David Charles argues that we shouldn’t take “the judgement” or belief at the end of deliberation as propositional.³⁶ On this view, at the end of a deliberation the deliberator pictures to herself a course of action, but doesn’t judge it to be the best course of action. That judgement or belief emerges later, and it is intrinsically desiderative. This cannot be Aristotle’s view, however, because he elsewhere explicitly denies that decisions are beliefs, or even beliefs of a kind (*doxatēs*). Hence, decisions can’t be equally well described as desires or beliefs:

[T6] Now presumably no one even claims that decision is the same as belief in general. But it is not the same as a belief of a kind: ... Again, we choose to take or avoid something good or bad, but we judge what it is, whom it benefits or how ... We may grant that decision follows or implies belief, but that is irrelevant for the question we are asking; our question is whether decision is the same as some sort of belief.³⁷

Aristotle argues that even though judgements and beliefs can precede and cause decisions, they are not, themselves, decisions. They are not even “beliefs of a kind” (*tis*). He excludes that beliefs of any kind, even evaluative beliefs such as the belief that “this benefits me”, or the belief that “this is best for me”, can be the same as decisions. This account of decision undermines the view that intellectual evaluative cognition is intrinsically desiderative. In the case of decision, judgements and beliefs precede and cause deliberative desires, but are not another way of describing those desires.

³⁵See the measurement that deliberation requires in *De Anima*, and the description of deliberation in *NE* 1112b15–20, where the deliberator is pictured not only as working out the means to achieve a set end, but also as assessing the advantages of the different ways in which the end can be brought about.

³⁶Charles 2006, p. 28.

³⁷ὅλως μὲν οὖν δόξη ταύτων ἴσως οὐδὲ λέγει οὐδεὶς. ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τινί: ... καὶ προαιρούμεθα μὲν λαβεῖν ἢ φυγεῖν ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, δοξάζομεν δὲ τί ἐστὶν ἢ τίνι συμφέρει ἢ πῶς ... εἰ δὲ προγίνεται δόξα τῆς προαιρέσεως ἢ παρακολουθεῖ, οὐδὲν διαφέρει: οὐ τοῦτο γὰρ σκοποῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ ταύτων ἐστὶ δόξη τινί. *NE* 1112a1–10.

The discussion so far suggests that intellectual evaluative cognition, unlike perceptual evaluative cognition, is not intrinsically desiderative. Furthermore, it suggests that intellectual evaluative cognitions are not always sufficient for desires. In some cases, for example when we are in the middle of a “detached” deliberation and we think about the advantages and disadvantages of the different courses of action open to us, our intellectual evaluative cognitions don’t cause desires. In other cases, for example when we form a specific kind of evaluative belief (such as the belief that something is best, or the greatest available pleasure), intellectual evaluative cognition does cause desires. However, in these cases, the evaluative beliefs are distinct from the desires they cause.

4.4 Evaluative *Phantasia* and Desires

In order to propose an exhaustive account of the relationship between evaluative cognition and desires, analysing evaluative thought and perception is not enough. Aristotle envisages yet another type of evaluative cognition which is connected to desires: *phantasia*.

Having established that evaluative perception is possible, it is not hard to prove that we can have “phantastic” grasp of evaluative features.³⁸ After all, *phantasiai* are perceptual remnants: a *phantasia* is “a motion” generated by perception, and *phantasiai* “are similar to the corresponding perceptions”.³⁹ If *phantasiai* are remnants of past perceptions and they are similar to such perceptions, a *phantasia* which is a remnant of a past evaluative perception will be evaluative too.

It is however more difficult to account for the relationship between evaluative *phantasiai* and desires. In the ethical works, in the psychological works and arguably in the *Rhetoric*, evaluative *phantasia* is represented as desire-causing.⁴⁰ Although a very strong case can be made for the view that evaluative *phantasia* on its own causes desires, many have doubted the correctness of this interpretation.⁴¹ The main objection against it seems to be that while we needn’t take *phantasiai* to be true, our desires reflect what we take or don’t take to be the case.⁴² In other words, while

³⁸See for this strategy Moss 2012, ch. 3. A full analysis of Aristotle’s account of *phantasia* lies outside the scope of this work. In particular, for my purposes it makes no difference whether *phantasia* is a capacity or a faculty which is separate from perception (see further Johansen 2012, ch. 10).

³⁹*DA* 429a1–2, *DA* 429a4–5.

⁴⁰*DA* 433b5–10, *EE* 1235b25–29 and *Rhet.* 1378a30–b1–10.

⁴¹See *inter alia* Dow 2009, Leighton 1982, Nussbaum 1996, p. 307. The opposite thesis is implied in Cooper 1989.

⁴²That we needn’t take our *phantasiai* to be true is clear from Aristotle’s account of illusions (see *Insomn.* 459a7–9). In what follows, I take the expressions “taking to be the case”, “taking to be true”

phantasia needn't be endorsed, the cognitive cause of a desire must: merely having a *phantasia* of a scary lion does not cause a desire to flee, taking it to be the case that there is a scary lion does. Hence, an evaluative *phantasia* cannot be desire-causing on its own. In order to be desire-causing, it must be endorsed.

The thesis that evaluative *phantasia* needs endorsement in order to be desire-causing, however, faces a compelling objection. According to Aristotle, the independent functioning of evaluative *phantasia* and belief is at the basis of the explanation of recalcitrant desires, i.e. desires that go against what we think is good or best for us. In some cases, the evaluative cognition at the basis of a recalcitrant desire is entirely unendorsed by the desirer.⁴³ This happens when one desires things that look good, or appear good, even though she believes that they are not good. Aristotle clearly admitted for the possibility of such cases, for he describes one in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

[T7] The object of desire and the object of wish are either the good or the apparent good (*phainomenon agathon*). For this reason (*dio*) the pleasant is an object of desire (*orekton*): for it is an apparent good, since some people think it [sc. good], and to others it appears [sc. good] even though they do not think it so—*phantasia* and belief are not in the same part of the soul—. ⁴⁴

In this passage, evaluative *phantasia* is described as able to cause desires when it is contradicted by rational beliefs. *Phantasia* can turn something into the object of desire by representing it as good, even when one believes it *not* to be good.

Hence, evaluative *phantasia* causes desires whether or not we endorse its representations. Perhaps, then, evaluative *phantasia* is, like evaluative perception, intrinsically affective. A way to characterise this view in terms of endorsement is to say that any evaluative *phantasia* always entails some form of low level non-rational endorsement

and “endorsing” to capture the same cognitive stance toward a mental representation. The contrast between endorsed and unendorsed mental representations is sometimes described in terms of the contrast between beliefs and mere appearances. However, it does not have to be, for endorsement can be either rational or non-rational. See below, Moss 2012, section 4.7 and G. Pearson 2014, pp. 187 and ff.

⁴³Not all recalcitrant desires will necessarily follow this cognitive set up. As Dow 2014, Section 6 points out, in some cases the struggle between thought and *phantasia* might arise because *phantasia* is unable to take all the features of the situation into account and to trigger an “all things considered” emotional reaction. In these cases, only some aspects of the evaluative phantastic representation are rationally taken to be false. For example, *phantasia* might be correct in so far as it represents a slight as painful and worthy of retaliation, but wrong in so far as it suggests that the retaliatory act is to be pursued here and now. See e.g. *NE* 1149a21–b26.

⁴⁴τὸ γὰρ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ βουλευτὸν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὀρεκτὸν: φαινόμενον γάρ τι ἀγαθόν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ δοκεῖ, τοῖς δὲ φαίνεται καὶ μὴ δοκεῖ. οὐ γὰρ ἐν ταύτῳ τῆς ψυχῆς ἡ φαντασία καὶ ἡ δόξα. *EE* 1235b25–29 (quoted in 2.2). Cf *Rhet.* 1378a30–31 and *DA* 433b5–10.

and thereby causes affective responses, which is compatible with the subject taking *phantasia* to be false at the rational level.⁴⁵

De Anima, however, gives us a compelling reason to believe that Aristotle took the causal link between evaluative *phantasia* and desires to be neither universal nor necessary:

[T8] It is clear that mere thought (*noēsis*) and opinion (*hupolēpsis*) are not the same. The former affection [sc. thought or *phantasia*] is up to us whenever we want—it involves representing something before our eyes, as those who consider their memories and construct images—, believing however is not up to us: it is necessary either to say the truth or to speak falsely. Furthermore whenever we believe that something is fearful or terrible, we are immediately affected, and the same happens with something reassuring. With respect to *phantasia* we are like someone looking at fearful or reassuring things in a picture.⁴⁶

In this passage we find a contrast between the affective powers of *phantasia* and belief. Whenever we believe that something is fearful or terrible we are immediately affected. We immediately feel fear, or we immediately desire to flee. Thus, evaluative beliefs “affect” us and they cause desiderative responses. However, when we have a *phantasia* of something fearful, we often remain unaffected: it is as if we were looking at a picture of something fearful. This suggests that evaluative *phantasia*, for rational creatures like us, can be unlike evaluative beliefs causally inert with respect to desires.⁴⁷

This passage, considered in combination with the passages where evaluative *phantasia* is the causal source of desires, suggests that the connection between evaluative *phantasia* and desires cannot be captured by a single general account, but *depends on*

⁴⁵This view is defended by Moss 2012, ch. 4.7. That Aristotle might have at one point held an account on these lines is suggested by *De Motu* 701b33–702a2.

⁴⁶ὅτι δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ αὐτὴ [νόησις] καὶ ὑπόληψις, φανερόν. τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ τὸ πάθος ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἔστιν, ὅταν βουλώμεθα (πρὸ ὀμμάτων γὰρ ἔστι τι ποιήσασθαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημονικοῖς τιθέμενοι καὶ εἰδωλοποιοῦντες), δοξάζειν δ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἢ ψεύδεσθαι ἢ ἀληθεύειν. ἔτι δὲ ὅταν μὲν δοξάσωμεν δεινόντι ἢ φοβερόν, εὐθύς συμπάσχομεν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θαρραλέον· κατὰ δὲ τὴν φαντασίαν ὡσαύτως ἔχομεν ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ θεώμενοι ἐν γραφῇ τὰ δεινὰ ἢ θαρραλέα. *DA* 427b15–24 In 15, I retain νόησις and I follow the majority of manuscripts which have ἡ αὐτὴ as opposed to αὐτὴ (see however Barbotin and Jannone 1966). I follow Polansky, Freudenthal and Hamlyn, *inter alia*, in taking *noēsis* in the first line to stand for *phantasia*. For a similar use see *DA* 433a9–10, Polansky 2007, pp. 410 ff. Hamlyn 1968, p. 132, Freudenthal 2010, cf. Simplicius 206, 5 ff. and Philoponus 492, 24. Since in this passage Aristotle is contrasting belief (*doxa* or *hupolēpsis*) and *phantasia*, it is clear that *to pathos* in the second line stands for *phantasia*.

⁴⁷The passage is concerned, I think, with desires to act and in general fully fledged emotional reactions. It remains silent on whether evaluative *phantasia* always causes weaker affections such as shuddering or being startled.

the circumstances.⁴⁸ Evaluative *phantasia* can cause desires and emotions, although, unlike belief, it doesn't necessarily do so in every case, or even in *most* cases.

From T8, we can extrapolate some of the conditions that determine whether or not evaluative *phantasia* is causally inert. There, Aristotle introduces the claim that *phantasia* is affectively inert right after having described a voluntary exercise of *phantasia*: the kind of imaginative exercise that is involved constructing images or inventing memory-aids. This suggests that the claim that *phantasia* is affectively inert is limited to its voluntary exercises. The view that voluntariness matters for the affective powers of *phantasia* is an interpretive alternative to the view that *phantasia* is intrinsically affective and to the view that it causes desires only if it is endorsed. On the voluntariness view, voluntary evaluative *phantasia* is affectively inert, and involuntary evaluative *phantasia* can cause desires and emotions.⁴⁹

According to the voluntariness view, at *DA* 427b15–24 we find a contrast between the capacity to form a belief, which is not exercised at will, and the capacity to form a *phantasia*, which can be exercised at will (but doesn't have to be).⁵⁰ This contrast leads Aristotle to notice a second contrast between evaluative *phantasia* and evaluative belief: while evaluative belief is always (or for the most part) affective,

⁴⁸*contra* Frede 1992, p. 280 fn 3, Schofield 1992, pp. 254 ff. and McCready-Flora 2013b, esp. Section V. For a similar view, see Everson 1997, p.170 ff. This interpretation makes sense of the contrast between belief and *phantasia* even if the connection between evaluative belief and desires is not a necessary connection, but holds only for the most part (*contra* McCready-Flora 2013b, pp. 13 ff.). It might be the case that while beliefs are *for the most part* affective, *phantasia* is not.

⁴⁹It seems plausible to restrict this view to fully fledged desiderative or emotional responses, so that it is compatible with the thesis that both voluntary and involuntary *phantasia* can cause weaker affective reactions such as shuddering. Aristotle does not say much about these affections in *De Anima*, though he briefly mentions them in *De Motu* 701b15 ff. The voluntariness view is, as far as I am aware, only mentioned by Moss 2012, ch. 4.7, who does not defend it or explicitly endorse it. The thesis that *phantasia* can be either voluntary or involuntary is not in tension with Aristotle's view that *phantasia* is "up to us whenever we want". *Phantasia* is up to us because we can will ourselves to exercise it. From the fact that we can activate *phantasia* at will and control the contents of our *phantasia* it doesn't follow that all the *phantasiai* that occur to us arise at will. Some of them are presented to us involuntarily. Similarly, even though the capacity to kick is up to me and I can kick a leg up whenever I want to, sometimes my kicks are involuntary, for example when my reflexes are being tested by a doctor. Aquinas, too, sees no tension between the view that *phantasia* is up to us and the view that some *phantasiai* are not up to us. See his *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, 641 ff. and Frede 2001, pp. 163-164. Hence, Aristotle does not use the phrase *eph' hēmin hotan boulōmetha* to indicate that a mental capacity is always exercised at will. This is confirmed by the only other occurrence of the phrase in *De Anima* (*DA* 417b24–26), where the capacity described as up to us whenever we want is the capacity to think (*noēsai*). Even though Aristotle believes that we can think at will, he doesn't take this to imply that our thoughts are never compelled. At *NE* 1147a24 ff., for example, he famously argues that it is necessary for us to affirm the conclusion of a theoretical syllogism if we know the premisses and the rules of inference.

⁵⁰While it is uncontroversial that for Aristotle we can't will ourselves to form beliefs, it is more difficult to explain the connection between this thesis and the thesis that (with respect to beliefs) it is necessary to speak truly or falsely. See Barnes 2006 and McCready-Flora 2013a on this point.

evaluative *phantasia* can be affective only when it is involuntary. If I involuntarily have a *phantasia* of a threatening predator I can be scared, if I voluntarily form a *phantasia* of a threatening predator I will not be scared.

On the voluntariness view, whether evaluative *phantasia* causes a desire to act or an emotion does not depend on whether we take it to be true.⁵¹ Whether or not we form a *phantasia* voluntarily, however, does matter. This view is supported by the intuition that while we can will ourselves to form a *phantasia*, we generally don't will ourselves to form desires and emotions. Desires and emotions are passive affections, and *phantasiai* can be voluntary mental exercises. Hence, it makes sense to restrict the affective powers of *phantasia* to involuntary evaluative *phantasia*. This is compatible with the fact that we sometimes engage at will in phantastic or imaginative exercises in order to acquire certain desires. We might, for example, voluntarily imagine ourselves in the position of someone who is suffering in order to acquire the desire to end her suffering.⁵² Even in this case, arguably, it is misleading to say that voluntary *phantasia* or imagination generates a desire. We are better described as voluntarily making ourselves imagine something, or as voluntarily putting ourselves in the position to imagine something that will generate a desire. The imagined scenario or the content of the *phantasia* which causes the desire, however, remains involuntary.⁵³

The voluntariness view can also explain why psychological states of the same kind and with the same content like a *phantasia* of a scary predator are sometimes emotionally inert and sometimes the source of an emotion. While such psychological states might be indistinguishable on the basis of their content, they are distinguishable on the basis of their causal history, for whether or not we formed a *phantasia* at will is transparent to us.

In conclusion, the voluntariness view is compatible with the comparison between having a *phantasia* of something scary and looking at terrible and fearful things in a

⁵¹From the fact that *phantasia* is voluntary, it doesn't follow that it won't be taken to be true. Compare the case of voluntary *phantasia* with the case of voluntary exercises of a mode of thought Aristotle describes at *DA* 417b16–26: the exercise of knowledge, or *theoria*. Contemplating what we know obviously implies taking it to be true, and it can be, for Aristotle, an activity we engage in voluntarily, or at will.

⁵²See Hare 1981, ch. 5, pp. 87 ff. I thank Terry Irwin for suggesting this reference. Although it is clear that some of the cognitive roles Aristotle assigns to *phantasia* correspond to the ones we would assign to imagination, the term *phantasia* notoriously has broader scope than imagination. For example, *phantasia* is involved in memory and recollection, as well as being necessary for conceptual thought. In this chapter, I do not aim to provide a comprehensive account of Aristotle's notion of *phantasia*, but simply note that involuntary *phantasia* might be, just like involuntary imagination, unendorsed and reality oriented.

⁵³See Williams 1973 for a parallel distinction between believing something at will and voluntarily making ourselves believe something.

picture. The analogy is meant emphasize that the phantastic exercise is not affective: looking at pictures is, for Aristotle, an activity that leaves us unaffected, but it is not necessarily an activity that requires us to exercise *phantasia*.⁵⁴ Hence, it does not have to be taken to suggest, in addition, that *phantasiai*, like pictures, are generally unendorsed or taken to be false.

One might think that, despite these advantages, the voluntariness view has an implausible consequence. It entails that many desires, and in particular desires to act, will be detached from reality. If endorsement doesn't matter for *phantasia*-based desires to act, then these will often be directed to the most unlikely and wild *merely imagined* objects of desire. This objection, however, misfires. The view that involuntary evaluative *phantasia* causes desires is not, to begin with, an exhaustive account of the cognitive basis of all our desires. It simply gives a criterion to distinguish between cases in which evaluative *phantasia* causes an affective response, and cases in which it does not. Hence, it leaves it open for desires to be based on beliefs and perception, as well as *phantasia*, and it allows belief and perception-based desires to be as reality oriented as one's beliefs and perceptions are.⁵⁵

The psychological datum that the majority of our desires is reality oriented, however, might still be thought to make the voluntariness view suspicious. Even though the voluntariness view allows our belief and perception-based affections to be reality oriented, it might be thought to suggest that most of our *phantasia*-based desires and emotions are detached from reality. But it just doesn't seem to be true of us, the objection would go, that the more fervid our *phantasia* is the more our mind is encumbered by wild desires.

However, even this version of the objection fails. It fails precisely because the unendorsed evaluative cognitions that can give rise to desires are involuntary. Involuntary cognitive exercises, including involuntary exercises of *phantasia*, tend to represent practically relevant realistic possibilities, as opposed to unrealistic (or unlikely) ones. Although Aristotle does not discuss the fact that involuntary *phantasia* is in most cases reality oriented, it is plausible to think that he noticed it is. First, he was probably

⁵⁴In the *Politics* music affects everyone, paintings and statues do not (*Pol.* 1340a29–40, discussed further in chapter 5.4). Neither the passage from *De Anima* nor the one from the *Politics* suggest that *phantasia* is required for engaging with a fictional representation, pictorial or musical. As far as I can tell, the same holds for Aristotle's account of our engagement with tragedy in the *Poetics* (see also McCready-Flora 2013b, p. 9 ff. on this point).

⁵⁵Thus, the view is compatible with a mixed account of the cognitive basis of desires as described in G. Pearson 2014 and with the fact that many of our desires are responsive to changes in our beliefs. See Dow 2014, Section 2 and Dow 2009, Section 1 on this requirement for a persuasive theory of the cognitive basis of our emotions.

aware that it takes effort to construct wildly unlikely scenarios, and this effort is most of the time conscious and voluntary. Naturally imitative creatures like us find it simple to construct scenarios and stories which are close cousins of what we encounter in our everyday life.⁵⁶ It is common, in normal circumstances, to engage in this kind of exercise voluntarily (for example when we deliberate) or involuntarily (for example when we are worried about a dangerous prospect). It takes more effort, however, to depart from what we have experience of and create new unlikely scenarios from scratch. We tend to engage in this kind of imaginative exercise voluntarily (when we construct stories) or in special circumstances (if we are drunk, or asleep, or ill).

Second, Aristotle might have noticed that involuntary *phantasia* is reality oriented because we rely on it to assess the truth of counterfactual claims.⁵⁷ Consider for example cases in which we make ourselves imagine trying something out to decide whether we'd succeed. In these cases, we voluntarily make ourselves imagine trying, but involuntarily imagine whether we'd succeed, and use involuntary imagination to assess the truth of the conditional "if I tried I would succeed".⁵⁸ We use this method, for example, to decide whether to jump over a river, whether to move the sofa through the door. In both these cases, we assume the antecedent of a conditional voluntarily, but we use involuntary imagination to assess the consequent. If involuntary imagination suggests that the jump would succeed and the sofa would go through, we take the conditional "if I jumped I'd get to the other side" and the conditional "if I pushed the sofa it'd go through" to be true.

It takes effort or special circumstances to imagine unlikely scenarios. Involuntary appearances are often the appropriate basis for assessing the truth of counterfactual claims. It is plausible to think that Aristotle noticed these common features of involuntary *phantasia*. Hence, it is plausible to think that he took involuntary *evaluative phantasia* to generate reality oriented desires and emotions. We have good reason to believe that Aristotle thought the voluntariness view capable of accounting for the fact that most – though not all – of our *phantasia* based desires and emotions are reality oriented.

In conclusion, the view that voluntariness matters for the affective powers of *phantasia* is consistent with the general account of the connection between evaluative cognition and desires. Consider deliberation: sometimes the evaluative thoughts and *phantasiai* we visualize and measure while we deliberate do not cause desires, especially

⁵⁶See *Poet.* 1448b5 ff. on our imitative nature.

⁵⁷For this view and the cases I mention in its support see Williamson Forthcoming.

⁵⁸See above for the distinction between voluntarily imagining and voluntarily making ourselves imagine.

if the deliberation is desideratively detached. The evaluative judgements or beliefs we come to at the end of a detached deliberation, however, do have affective consequences. This difference between deliberative thoughts and beliefs can be traced back to whether the evaluative intellectual cognition at stake is produced at will. Since we don't believe at will, our evaluative beliefs can cause desires.⁵⁹ Constructing possible scenarios as an aid to deliberation is causally inert with respect to desires, on the contrary, for it is something we engage in at will. This is why we can imagine or think of scary things and remain unaffected, and we can visualise and think about the advantages of different courses of action and remain unaffected.⁶⁰

This suggests that some deliberations will be detached, and that some deliberations will involve desires and emotions before they come to a conclusion. Other deliberative processes will be mixed: to some extent passionate, and to some extent detached. A deliberation can be passionate or desiderative when it deals with and measures evaluative cognitions that are involuntarily presented to the thinker. Akratic and enkratic deliberators engage in deliberations of this sort when they work out that what looks like the pleasantest option is not really the best option. A deliberation will be detached when it deals with scenarios that are voluntarily envisaged and constructed by the thinker. This type of deliberation will be, for example, the kind performed by those who are conjecturing and assessing the worth of different ways to achieve a set goal.⁶¹

Evaluative thoughts and evaluative *phantasiai* are similarly related to desires. Neither evaluative thoughts nor evaluative *phantasiai* are intrinsically desiderative or necessarily desire-causing. In particular, they are *not* desire-causing when they are produced by the thinker at will, and they can be desire-causing when they arise involuntarily.⁶² Aristotle's account of the affective powers of *phantasia* is not an *ad hoc* solution that applies to a single problematic case, but an account implicit in his study of the connection between evaluative cognition and desires.

⁵⁹The view that forming a belief is not up to us is not in tension with the view that we can voluntarily engage in activities that lead to the formation of a belief (such as for example deliberation). What matters is that, in normal circumstances we do not will ourselves to form beliefs, or that willing oneself to form a belief is not the correct way to form one.

⁶⁰Even though the evaluative mental representations we produce at will do not cause desires, they might affect us a little, for example they can cause some psychophysical reactions like shuddering. Such reactions, however, are very different from full-blown desires (See *De Motu* 701b15–20). Similarly, in the *Politics*, Aristotle admits that looking at pictures might affect us, but he believes that it does so only a little (*Pol.* 1340a29–39).

⁶¹*NE* 1113a10–14.

⁶²Involuntary evaluative thoughts and appearances might not be always sufficient either, for having the suitable prospect as its object might be required for an evaluative appearance or thought to cause a desire (See below).

4.5 Conclusion: Desires in Aristotle's Ethics and Psychology

While evaluative perception is intrinsically desiderative, evaluative thoughts, even though they are not intrinsically desiderative, can cause desires provided they are not produced by the thinker at will. Evaluative *phantasiai*, similarly, can cause desires when they arise involuntarily, but not when they are produced at will. This analysis covers the three main type of cognitions that give rise to desires in human beings, and it has at least one important implication for Aristotle's ethics, and two important implications for Aristotle's psychology.

The ethical implication is that eliminating certain false evaluative appearances is necessary in order for beings like us to achieve virtue. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, eliminating vicious desires is necessary in order to be virtuous. Enkratics, even though they act as they should, are neither virtuous nor practically wise precisely because they do not take pleasure in acting rightly and they desire to perform vicious actions.⁶³

The exact status of the cognitive counterpart of the thesis that eliminating vicious desires is necessary to achieve virtue is controversial. According to some interpreters, the difference between enkratics and akratics and virtuous people is that the former have false evaluative beliefs.⁶⁴ According to other interpreters, what differentiates virtuous people from enkratics and akratics is the fact that enkratics and akratics see certain things as good even when they are not really good for them. In other words, enkratics and akratics have, unlike virtuous people, false evaluative perceptions of false evaluative *phantasiai*. In most interpretations of this kind, however, enkratics and akratics do not fully repudiate the content of their phantastic or perceptual appearances. Their false evaluative appearances are at least to some extent endorsed, although perhaps they are not *rationally endorsed*.⁶⁵

On all these views, what is required in order to eliminate vicious desires is not the elimination of the false evaluative cognitions that cause them. What is required of virtuous agents is that they do not endorse, rationally or non-rationally, whatever false evaluative cognitions they may have. My interpretation, however, suggests that akratics and enkratics need not have false evaluative beliefs, *and that* the cognitions that give rise to their bad desires need not be endorsed at any level. Their bad desires

⁶³*NE* 1104b5 ff., *NE* 1102b20 ff., *NE* 1152a1 ff.

⁶⁴The view is implied, for example, in Dow 2009.

⁶⁵Moss 2012, pp. 90 ff. suggests that these desires are non-rationally endorsed, Dow 2014 argues that they are endorsed at least at some level by the desirer.

can be based on entirely unendorsed *phantasiai*. An evaluative *phantasia* can cause a desire to act viciously even if we are aware of its falsity.

Evaluative perceptions, evaluative beliefs, unendorsed involuntary *phantasiai* and involuntary thoughts can give rise to desires to act viciously. Hence, changing one's mind, or coming to realise that a belief one had is false will sometimes be enough to remove a desire. For example, if I realise that the piece of cake in front of me is fake and inedible, I will no longer believe the cake to be good and I will no longer desire to eat it.

On other occasions, changing one's mind and withholding rational endorsement won't be enough: the unwanted desire will remain until one removes the involuntary evaluative appearance. Learning that smoking is unhealthy and bad might neither stop the smoker from involuntarily seeing cigarettes as good and desirable nor prevent the smoker from desiring to smoke. The fact that sometimes it takes more than changing one's mind in order to remove a desire is neither mysterious nor a sign of deep irrationality. Rather, it is the consequence of the fact that evaluative unendorsed *phantasiai* can cause desires.

Some might object that there is a case the theory I have attributed to Aristotle would struggle to account for. Sometimes, coming to believe that an evaluative appearance is false is enough to remove the desire associated with the appearance, but not enough to remove the appearance itself. Upon realising that the cake in front of me is made of plastic I no longer believe that the cake is good and no longer desire it, but the fake cake might still *look* good and desirable to me. The theory that evaluative appearances can cause desires only if they are involuntary is, at best, silent on this case. The appearance of the fake cake as good is involuntary, and therefore can cause a desire according to the theory. However, in this case the appearance does not give rise to a desire, and theory does not explain why.

Aristotle does not discuss this kind of case, for the only context in which he treats evaluative appearances as desideratively inert is one in which such appearances are voluntary.⁶⁶ However, there are two ways in which he could account for involuntary and desideratively inert evaluative appearances. His view might be that involuntary evaluative thoughts and appearances cause desires to act only when they involve correctly envisaging prospects. Involuntarily thinking or imagining the reed warbler's plumage as beautiful, or its song as pleasant doesn't cause a desire unless what we are envisaging as pleasant is, say, the prospect of hearing its song or looking at its

⁶⁶DA 427b16–24.

feathers.⁶⁷ Similarly, involuntarily imagining the fake cake as pleasant doesn't cause a desire for it unless what we are imagining as pleasant is the prospect of eating the cake.

Aristotle might also have distinguished between comparative and non-comparative evaluative appearances. He could have argued that only non-comparative evaluative appearances are desire causing (provided they are involuntary). When “x appears F” is used non-comparatively, the adjective “F” qualifies the subject “x”. When “x appears F” is used comparatively the adjective “F” qualifies the verb “to appear”. Thus, a non-comparative use of the proposition “the fake cake appears good” can be paraphrased as “it looks as if the fake cake is good”. A comparative use of the proposition “the fake cake appears good”, however, cannot be paraphrased in this way. The comparative use is meant to convey merely that the fake cake resembles in some respects a good real cake. The fake cake, for example, might have the same colours and texture of a real cake. Hence, the comparative *phantasia* that “the fake cake looks good” is neither contradicted by the belief that “the fake cake is not good”, nor is it desire-causing.⁶⁸

Aristotle's account of the cognitive basis of desires suggests that in order to become truly virtuous, an agent has to *remove*, and not merely *contradict*, the false evaluative *phantasiai*, thoughts and perceptions that give rise to vicious desires. This account also has important consequences for Aristotle's views on the cognitive psychology that is peculiar to humans. First, it suggests that the fact that we do not endorse recalcitrant desires does not explain why recalcitrant desires are irrational. In this respect, recalcitrant desires are different from contradictory beliefs. Beliefs aim at the truth.⁶⁹ To endorse something is to take it to be true. Thus, we believe what we rationally endorse, and it is contradictory to believe what we take to be false. For the same reason, having contradictory beliefs and being aware of it seems impossible, unless for someone who is deeply irrational. However, the same doesn't seem to be true about desires: desires do not aim at the truth, and therefore they do not march in step with rational endorsement. This is why having a recalcitrant desire is not irrational in the same way as knowingly having contradictory beliefs is irrational. Having a

⁶⁷See *HA* 616b16–18 for the attractive qualities of reed warbler's, and see G. Pearson 2012, pp. 34 ff. for the thesis that only evaluatively qualified *prospects* can be objects of desires.

⁶⁸For a discussion of the distinction between comparative and non-comparative uses of “appear” and “look” see e.g. Chisholm 1957, p 45 ff. Compare Kalderon 2011, p. 759 ff. Note that this notion of non-comparative appearances is different from the notion of epistemic appearances in Dow 2014, p. 15 ff. and perhaps Cooper 1998b, p. 417. On these views, epistemic appearances are the expression of what either the subject or her sub-personal cognitive faculties endorse or take to be the case.

⁶⁹For an account of how truth constrains belief formation for Aristotle see McCready-Flora 2013a.

recalcitrant desire might be a sign of *practical* irrationality, but unlike knowingly having contradictory beliefs and like perceptual illusions, it is not a sign of cognitive irrationality.⁷⁰ This is also why desiring something we take to be bad for us is a less exceptional and uncommon phenomenon than knowingly having conflicting beliefs.

Second, this account can clarify Aristotle's view that, in case of cognitive conflict of evaluative appearances, sometimes agents act on perceptual appearances and *phantasiai* against their beliefs. As I argued in chapter 3, we sometimes knowingly act on false evaluative appearances. However, unless it somehow contributes to our current goals, we don't act on false non-evaluative appearances if we believe them to be false. We eat sweets because they seem good, even though we know they are bad for us and even though we regard being healthy as one of our goals. But we don't try to hold the tower of Pisa in our hands even though from afar it seems little.

The connection between evaluative perception, evaluative *phantasia* and desires I outlined in this chapter can contribute to the explanation of this difference between evaluative cognitive conflict and non-evaluative cognitive conflict with a view to action. We sometimes act on evaluative cognitions we take to be false because taking them to be false doesn't always prevent them from causing desires. Rational endorsement does not control whether involuntary evaluative *phantasiai* cause desires to act. The rational control we have on our desires and, derivatively, on our actions is thus more limited than we might have initially thought.⁷¹

If right, my analysis in this chapter gives us further evidence that the non-rational part of human soul is sufficiently similar to a non-human animal soul. The connection between cognition, desire and action that we find in human beings is not too distant from the connection between cognition, desire and behaviour that we find in non-human animals. The human non-rational part of the soul is capable of making us live and desire "by perception" by controlling our motivation and actions.⁷² It can even exercise this kind of control independently of the rational part's discrimination of truth from falsity.

⁷⁰See also G. Pearson 2014, pp. 100 ff. I discuss Aristotle's account of practical rationality in chapter 6.

⁷¹This doesn't mean that we have no power over our desires, see ch. 2.3.

⁷²For a vivid description, see Aristotle's account of childish (i.e. non-rational) appetites ruling our life in *NE* 1119a35 ff.

Chapter 5

Perceiving the Pleasant, the Advantageous and the Fine

5.1 Introduction

In order to achieve virtue and avoid both bad desires and bad actions, we need to eliminate the false non-rational appearances that give rise to vicious desires. If this really is Aristotle's view, it is reasonable to expect his account of moral education to take it into account. In this chapter, I argue that this expectation is met: Aristotle's moral education is oriented, at least in part, toward the prevention or removal of false evaluative appearances that cause desires to act viciously.¹

I start with an account of the three basic categories of value about which the virtuous person is right and the vicious person is wrong: pleasantness, advantageousness and fineness. In the second section, I argue that human and (some) non-human animals can perceptually recognise pleasant and advantageous things. In the third and fourth section, I argue that the capacity to perceptually recognise fine things is peculiarly human. This human capacity can be cultivated by means of a specific kind of perceptual training with moral purposes: musical education. Musical education is important for moral education precisely because it trains us to perceptually recognise fine melodies, fine actions and fine characters. When our non-rational part can discriminate fine actions and characters, it is more responsive to rational persuasion and less likely to be subject to the false evaluative appearances which originate desires to act viciously.

¹My analysis in chapter 2 already suggested that eliminating desire-causing false appearances is at the basis of a successful communication between parts of the soul: the more discriminative and selectively attentive the non-rational part is, the more it will be able to listen to and speak with the same voice as reason.

5.2 The Pleasant, the Advantageous and the Fine

Aristotle associates “goods” with ends (*telē*) in many different contexts. In the context of his ethics and psychology, he draws an important connection between the good and the end in action.² This connection between goods and ends is preserved at the level of cognition. Aiming at something, or having it as an end, involves grasping it as having a positive evaluative feature, like goodness, or pleasantness. Consider, for example, the starting point of reasoning or inferences about actions, or about “the things to be done” (*tōn praktōn*):

Inferences about the things to be done have a principle: “since the end and the best is of such and such a sort” ... But this appears only to the good person: for vice leads us astray and produces false views about the principles of action.³

The starting point of practical reasoning, or reasoning about actions, is a *telos*, or an end. The end is what appears or is taken to be best. Vicious and virtuous people have, of course, different ends, and take different things to be best. Unlike the vicious person, however, the virtuous person is right about what is and is not best.⁴

The view that having something as an end in action involves grasping it *as* good in some respect is widespread in the interpretive literature. However, less attention is devoted to the fact that according to Aristotle we grasp our ends under different *guises*.⁵ We grasp our ends under the guise of the advantageous (*to sumpheron*, sometimes equated with the useful or *to chrēsimon*), the fine (*to kalon*) or the pleasant (*to hēdu*). Hence, having something as a *telos* can involve grasping it as advantageous, fine or pleasant.

In the third book of the *Topics*, we find an account of how to rank the different objects of choice against one another. In order to rank the “objects of choice” (*hairēta*),

²*NE* 1094a1, *Phys.* 194a32–33, *Pol.* 1252b34–35, *Met.* 983a31–32, *Rhet.* 1362a21–23, see also Moss 2012, p. 31, Segvic 2008a and Segvic 2008b.

³οἱ γὰρ συλλογισμοὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ἀρχὴν ἔχοντες εἰσιν, ἐπειδὴ τοιόνδε τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ ἄριστον ... τοῦτο δ' εἰ μὴ τῷ ἀγαθῷ, οὐ φαίνεται· διαστρέφει γὰρ ἡ μοχθηρία καὶ διαψεύδεται ποιεῖ περὶ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρχάς. *NE* 1144a32–37 (confront *NE* 1114a32–b1, and *De Motu* 701a20). See also Taylor 2003, Section 1 and Anscombe 1978, p. 44.

⁴In this passage, Aristotle implies that the end or principle appears only to the virtuous, and therefore that it does not appear to the enkratic and the akratic. This view is however, qualified in *NE* 1151a15–19, where he suggests that akratics can preserve the correct beliefs about the goal. See chapter 6.2.

⁵Exceptions include Cooper 1998b and Burnyeat 1980, p. 86.

it is useful to keep in mind that they are “said in many ways” and *with different ends in view*:⁶

You need to distinguish the many ways in which the things chosen at are called and with which ends in view, for example the advantageous (*sumpheron*), the fine (*kalon*) or the pleasant (*hēdu*): for that which is useful (*to chrēsimon*) for all or the majority of these ends is more choice-worthy than what is not equally useful.⁷

There are three basic grounds for choosing something: pleasure, advantage and fineness. When we choose something, we see it as pleasant, as advantageous, or as fine. Having clearly in mind the ends we have in view helps us to rank the things we choose against one another. If something is chosen as pleasant and as advantageous, say, it will be more choice-worthy than something which is merely chosen as pleasant.

The view expressed in the *Topics* is echoed in other passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Eudemian Ethics*. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the threefold division is used to describe the three different kinds of things we choose:

Since there are three things we choose (*eis tas haireseis*) and three we avoid (*eis tas phugas*), the fine, the advantageous and the pleasant, and three contraries of these, about all these the good person is right and the bad person is wrong and mistaken, but most of all about pleasure: indeed pleasure is in common with the [other] animals, and it accompanies all the pursued things: thus also the fine and the advantageous appear pleasant.⁸

⁶Translating *haireton* as “the object of choice” is not the only option: “what should be chosen” and “what can be chosen” are other possibilities. I chose “the object of choice” because I take it that Aristotle’s focus here is on how to rank different things we *already* chose. Translating *to haireton* as “the object of choice” (see Cooper 1998b, pp. 265–266) can potentially be misleading (as Cooper acknowledges), for “choice” is one of the standard translations of *prohairesis*, and *prohairesis* is different from mere *hairesis* because it involves deliberation and reasoning (see *NE* 1112a15 ff.). In his Charles 2012, p. 23 fn. 6, David Charles suggests that *hairesis* might be glossed as “decisive desire”, i.e. the desire that controls action, which would make *ta haireta* correspond to “decisively desired objects”. If his account is correct, then the preferred translation for *haireta* in the *Topics*, where the *haireta* are compared against one another before action, would be “what can be decisively desired”. Another possible translation for *to haireton* is “object of pursuit” (see Burnyeat 1980, p. 91 fn. 25).

⁷Ἐτι διελέσθαι ποσαχῶς τὸ αἰρετὸν λέγεται καὶ τίνων χάριν, οἷον τοῦ συμφέροντος ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ ἢ τοῦ ἡδέος· τὸ γὰρ πρὸς ἅπαντα ἢ πρὸς τὰ πλείω χρήσιμον αἰρετώτερον ἂν ὑπάρχοι τοῦ μὴ ὁμοίως. *Top.* 118b28–30 Translation loosely based on Forster’s.

⁸τριῶν γὰρ ὄντων τῶν εἰς τὰς αἰρέσεις καὶ τριῶν τῶν εἰς τὰς φυγὰς, καλοῦ συμφέροντος ἡδέος, καὶ τριῶν τῶν ἐναντίων, αἰσχροῦ βλαβεροῦ λυπηροῦ, περὶ ταῦτα μὲν πάντα ὁ ἀγαθὸς κατορθωτικὸς ἐστὶν ὁ δὲ κακὸς ἀμαρτητικὸς, μάλιστα δὲ περὶ τὴν ἡδονήν· κοινή τε γὰρ αὕτη τοῖς ζῴοις, καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπὸ τὴν αἴρεσιν παρακολουθεῖ· καὶ γὰρ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ συμφέρον ἡδὺ φαίνεται. *NE* 1104b30–1105a1. See also *NE* 1176a16–19 and *NE* 1173b20–24.

Here, we find the same tripartite division between the advantageous, the pleasant and the fine we saw in the *Topics*. In addition, Aristotle emphasizes that only the good person judges correctly about the advantageous, the fine and the pleasant. The underlying assumption is that what seems advantageous, pleasant or fine to the good person is what really is advantageous, pleasant or fine.

Close relatives of this threefold division recur in the Aristotelian Corpus. At the beginning of the discussion of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the fine is replaced with the good, and the advantageous with the useful:

For, it seems, not everything is loved, but only the lovable, and this is either good, or pleasant or useful. However, it seems that the useful is the source of some good or some pleasure; hence the good and the pleasant are lovable as ends.⁹

In this passage, Aristotle suggests that the useful (*to chrēsimon*) is loved, but not as an end in itself. Rather, it is loved as a means to the good or the pleasant. This has led some to think that the advantageous (*to sumpheron*) and the useful (*to chrēsimon*) must differ, for the advantageous is an end in itself, and the useful is merely instrumental.¹⁰ However, Aristotle seems to use the two terms alternatively, switching from one to the other in his discussion of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹¹ Hence, he seems to treat the useful and the advantageous as goods that can either be instrumental or non-instrumental: they are sometimes pursued as means to other ends, and at other times they are constitutive of one's own non-instrumental good, or to one's own self sufficiency.¹²

Similar uses of *to chrēsimon* can be found in the discussion of friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics*.¹³ In the same treatise, we find out that an ancestor of the threefold division was inscribed at the entrance of the Delian Temple. This suggests that the division might be based on a common belief, or *endoxon*.¹⁴

⁹δοκεῖ γὰρ οὐ πᾶν φιλεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ φιλητόν, τοῦτο δ' εἶναι ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἡδὺ ἢ χρήσιμον· δόξειε δ' ἂν χρήσιμον εἶναι δι' οὗ γίνεται ἀγαθόν τι ἢ ἡδονή, ὥστε φιλητὰ ἂν εἴη τὰγαθόν τε καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς τέλη. *NE* 1155b18–21.

¹⁰Cooper 1998b, pp. 265–266 proposes this interpretation relying mostly on the *Rhetoric: Rhet.* 1389b35–1390a1 and *Rhet.* 1389b35–1390a1. In the same treatise, however, the advantageous things are sometimes merely instrumentally good. At 1362a17–21, Aristotle says that rhetoricians deal with the advantageous when they determine means to set ends.

¹¹See *NE* 1156a20–31, *NE* 1157a25–28. I thank Terry Irwin for the references. See also Crisp 2014, p. 234, fn. 9.

¹²See e.g. the advantageous as a good for oneself (αὐτῷ ἀγαθόν) at *Rhet.* 1389b35–1390a1.

¹³*EE* 1236b1–10 and *EE* 1242a8–9.

¹⁴Burnyeat 1980, p. 86, Cooper 1998b, p. 266, Gauthier and Jolif 1970, p. 125, Stewart 1892, p. 180. Stewart speculates that those who seek the fine and the advantageous have a systematic and

The just is the finest thing, health is the best. But the most pleasant of all is getting what one wants.¹⁵

Aristotle disagrees that the finest, the best and the most pleasant are to be found in different things. He believes that *eudaimonia* is the best, finest and most pleasant thing of all.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as the evidence from the *Topics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* shows, he accepts a related threefold division of the categories of value. The pleasant is the most basic category, the one that appeals to humans and non-human animals alike. The advantageous or useful and the fine are harder, at least for us, to distinguish. The advantageous applies to things like health and physical beauty, as well as to instrumental goods.¹⁷ Hence, the advantageous might be what is good for one's self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), or what promotes other goods, including the fine and the pleasant. The fine is the highest category of value, one that applies most specifically to virtuous action, but extends to the sphere of unchanging things.¹⁸

5.3 Recognising the Advantageous Perceptually

The pleasant, the advantageous and the fine are three distinct categories of value, and it is distinctive of the virtuous person to be right about them. If the virtuous person is the measure of the pleasant, the advantageous and the fine, the rational beliefs she has about what possesses these features and what doesn't are true. Conversely, the vicious person will have false beliefs about what is fine and advantageous. This entails that virtuous and vicious people can think of things as pleasant, as advantageous and as fine. Will they also be able to perceptually recognise particulars which possess these features? In light of the analysis of the cognitive limits of perception in chapter 1, we have no preliminary reason to doubt that they would. Perception is able to grasp general types as properties of particulars. Hence, it should be able to grasp particulars as pleasant, fine and advantageous. Perception is not able to grasp a definition or an account of fineness and advantageousness. However, we should be able to perceptually

ordered conception of goodness, whereas those who seek the pleasant are unsystematically concerned with particular and immediate pleasures. For a platonic ancestor, see *Laws* 662e8–663b6.

¹⁵ κάλλιστον τὸ δικαιοτάτον, λῶστον δ' ὑγιάνειν· πάντων ἥδιστον δ' οὗ τις ἐρᾷ τὸ τυχεῖν· *EE* 1214a5–7.

¹⁶ *EE* 1214a7 ff.

¹⁷ *EE* 1214a5–7 above, *Top.* 118b35 ff. and in particular *Rhet.* 1362a19 ff.

¹⁸ *NE* 1115b13, *Met.* 1078a31–b36. For the connection between fineness and order see below. On the fine, see Richardson Lear 2006, Cooper 1998b, pp. 270–276, Irwin 2011 and Crisp 2014.

discriminate something as fine or advantageous without relying each time on inferences from perceptual evidence.¹⁹

As I argued in chapter 4.2, human and non-human animals are capable of perceiving things as pleasant. Perceiving something as pleasant is the same as desiring it. Perceiving something as pleasant is thus related to desires to act or to engage in purposive behaviour. *Phantasiai* deriving from pleasurable perceptions can be the cause of desires to act, provided they arise involuntarily.²⁰

Just as in the case of the pleasant (*to hēdu*), we find textual evidence in support of the view that we can perceptually recognise things as fine or as advantageous. Unlike perception of the pleasant, however, this kind of perceptual recognition is not available to all:

...They [sc. the many] have no notion of the fine and of what is truly pleasant, for they never tasted it.²¹

Now it is clear that a human is more of a political animal than all bees and all the other gregarious animals. Nor does nature, as we say, do anything in vain: indeed among the animals only humans have speech (*logon*). And while voice is an indication of pleasure and pain, and for this reason belongs to the other animals (their nature extends up until this: to have perception of pleasure and pain and to indicate it to each other), speech (*logos*) is to show the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore the just and the unjust too. This among all the animals belongs to humans, who are the only ones to have perception of good and bad, just and unjust and all the others. And an association of humans makes a family and a city.²²

In the first passage, the human ability to develop a notion (*ennoia*) of the fine is explained in virtue of a preliminary perceptual experience (tasting) of the fine. The second passage implies that human perceptual recognition of the advantageous is the reason (or one of the reasons) why humans do not have speech (*logos*) in vain.²³

¹⁹See chapter 1.3.

²⁰See chapter 4.4.

²¹...τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡδέος οὐδ' ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, ἄγευστοι ὄντες. *NE* 1179b15.

²²διότι δὲ πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῶον πάσης μελίττης καὶ παντὸς ἀγελαίου ζώου μᾶλλον, δῆλον. οὐθὲν γὰρ, ὡς φαμέν, μάτην ἢ φύσις ποιεῖ· λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζώων· ἢ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει ζώοις (μέχρι γὰρ τούτου ἢ φύσις αὐτῶν ἐλήλυθε, τοῦ ἔχειν αἴσθησιν λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος καὶ ταῦτα σημαίνειν ἀλλήλοις), ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστὶ τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον· τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν· ἢ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν. *Pol.* 1253a7–18.

²³The fact that *logos* is contrasted with voice suggests that the correct translation, here, is “speech”.

Mere voice (*phōnē*) is sufficient to indicate or signal (*sēmainein*) the pleasant and the painful. Speech, however, can go beyond voice and serve the purpose of showing (*dēlein*) the advantageous and the harmful. Hence, speech is only useful to creatures who have perception of features that go beyond the pleasant and the painful, like the advantageous and the harmful. Since, for Aristotle, we don't have speech in vain, we should be able to recognise the advantageous and the harmful perceptually.²⁴

The passage from the *Politics* implies, in addition, that non-human animals are limited to the pleasant and the painful. Humans are the only creatures who can perceive a wide range of evaluative features, a range that includes the good, the bad, the just, the unjust and "all the others". It seems plausible to infer that the other features in question include the fine and the advantageous.²⁵

We can perceptually recognise the fine and the advantageous, and these abilities differentiate us from at least some, and perhaps all, of the other animals. Perceptually recognising what is fine and advantageous is at the basis of specific desires to act: having had no taste of the fine prevents the many from avoiding disgraceful things and pursuing the fine; having a perceptual grasp of advantageous things (as well as good things, and just things) is connected to our tendency to construct and maintain political associations.²⁶

The abilities to perceptually recognise things as fine and advantageous are important for our ethical and political life. Clearly, they are specifically developed in beings like us for the sake of our rational activities, which include living well, inhabiting a *polis*, having a family or a community. However, this does not yet establish that we learn to recognise the fine and the advantageous perceptually with the help of our rational capacities.²⁷ In fact, we have reason to deny that the human ability to perceptually recognise these evaluative features requires the possession of thought, though it might be especially developed in humans for the sake of their rational part. Perceptual recognition of things as having evaluative features beyond mere pleasantness like fineness and advantageousness plays an important role in Aristotle's account of the kind of moral development that takes place before the age of reason. We must be trained to love the fine before we are able to comprehend and listen to arguments that

²⁴For a reconstruction and discussion of this difficult passage, see Mulgan 1974.

²⁵See also *NE* 1104b30–1105a1 above for the view that we share with the other animals the grasp of pleasure. As I show below, this view needs to be qualified. Though we are the only ones who can recognise the fine perceptually, *some* other animals can recognise the advantageous at least to a small degree.

²⁶*NE* 1179b11 ff. and *Pol.* 1253a7–18.

²⁷*Contra* Fortenbaugh 1975, pp. 67–70, on the difference between thought expanding our perceptual-recognitional capacities and their expansion being for the sake of rational thought see chapter 2.2.

teach us to be good.²⁸ Hence, it is plausible to think that our preliminary perceptual grasp of things as fine or advantageous does not require the possession of a developed rational part.²⁹

In addition, the view that humans can develop a more expanded perceptual range than the other animals before they develop their capacity to think was not uncommon in the ancient world. For example, in the *Laws*, Plato suggests that humans have a unique perceptual ability which no other being in the animal kingdom possesses: the ability to perceive order.

{Athenian Stranger}: We said at the beginning of the conversation, if you remember, that since the nature of all young beings is fiery and it is not such that they keep quiet either with their bodies or with their voice, they are always making noises and jumping around in a disorderly manner. But humans only by nature have perception of order in both these things, no other animal develops this ability, [sc. perception of order in voice and bodily movement].³⁰

For Plato, only humans can perceive order. This makes human young children able to enjoy music and to benefit from musical education even before they have developed the ability to think. The ability to perceive order is an ability that only humans possess, and they possess it independently of whether they have already developed thought or not.

It wouldn't be particularly surprising, therefore, if Aristotle attributed to humans the development of special cognitive abilities before they develop their ability to think. And, as I will argue below, Aristotle did believe that we can perceptually recognise advantageous and fine things without thought's help. We are better able than other animals to perceptually recognise advantageous things because we have good memory, and we can learn to perceptually recognise fine things because our perceptual abilities can be trained.

Let us look at human (and animal) perceptual recognition of the advantageous (*sumpheron*) first. In the last section, I argued that the advantageous is either conducive

²⁸NE 1179b30 See also musical education in the *Politics VIII* (discussed below).

²⁹For considerations on these lines concerning specifically perception of the good see for example Moss 2012, Ch. 2 and p. 39, concerning the fine (or, as she chooses to translate it, "the beautiful") see Achtenberg 2002, Ch. 5.

³⁰{AΘ.} Εἶπομεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, κατ' ἀρχὰς τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἀπάντων τῶν νέων διάπυρος οὔσα ἡσυχίαν οὐχ οἷα τε ἄγειν οὔτε κατὰ τὸ σῶμα οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν εἴη, φθέγγοιτο δ' αἰεὶ ἀτάκτως καὶ πηδῶ, τάξεως δ' αἰσθησὶν τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, τῶν ἄλλων μὲν ζώων οὐδὲν ἐφάπτοιτο, ἡ δὲ ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἔχει μόνη τοῦτο. *Laws* 664e3–8. Trans. based on Saunders 1997.

to other goods, or in some way contributing to one's self-sufficiency. The latter suggestion is confirmed by the *Rhetoric*, where we find a preliminary discussion of the advantageous:

They [sc. old people] live for the advantageous, and not for the fine, more than they should, for they are selfish: the advantageous is one's own good, the fine is good absolutely.³¹

The advantageous is one's own good, or a selfish good, i.e. what contributes to one's own survival, well-being, and self-sufficiency. When Aristotle lists the things that are usually seen as advantageous he mentions health, strength, beauty, as well as courage and wisdom. He argues that the advantageous does not only apply to single individuals, but also to communities. What is advantageous for a community is either what contributes to the community's survival and self-sufficiency, or what can serve to the community as an instrument to obtain some other goods: for example wealth, concord, and allies.³²

What is advantageous for each individual and for the community as a whole also plays an important role for the formation and preservation of a political community:

And the political community, too, seems both to have originally formed and to endure for the advantage.³³

Given the importance of the advantageous for the formation of a political community, it is not surprising to find it at the basis of the account of political friendship in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

Political [sc. friendship] is formed mostly because of the advantage.³⁴

³¹καὶ πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ζῶσιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς τὸ καλόν, μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ, διὰ τὸ φίλαυτοι εἶναι: τὸ μὲν γὰρ συμφέρον αὐτῶ ἀγαθόν ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ καλὸν ἀπλῶς. *Rhet.* 1389b35–1390a1.

³²See *Rhet.* 1362a21–b9 for a list of things which are commonly taken to be good and advantageous and see *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1422a5–15 for an account of what is advantageous for the community.

³³καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ δὲ κοινωνία τοῦ συμφέροντος χάριν δοκεῖ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς συνελθεῖν καὶ διαμένειν *NE* 1160a10–12. Note, however, that the complete association in the *polis* is not aimed at the advantage, but at living finely, which is the true goal of the city (see *Pol.* 1278a7–18). Living a communal life for the sake of the fine is specific to humans, and this type of communal life involves the capacity to deliberate rationally and engage in debates about what is fine, good or useful. However, as I argue below, the basic form of communal association, i.e. the communal life for the sake of advantage, is common between humans and non-human animals. See further Irwin 1990 on Aristotle's view that the fine is the proper aim of the political community.

³⁴ἡ δὲ πολιτικὴ συνέστηκε μὲν κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ μάλιστα. *EE* 1242a8–9. In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle tends to use the word *chrēsimon* instead of the word *sumpheron*. However, in light of the parallel discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where the two terms are used interchangeably, it is plausible to take *to chrēsimon* to correspond to *to sumpheron*.

Friendship for the reciprocal advantage is neither the best type of friendship, nor one which can only arise between humans:

It is clear from what we said before that the most important type of friendship is mutual affection and mutual preference between good people. ... This however arises only between humans (for only they have perception of decision). But the other types of friendship arise among the other animals too, indeed there manifestly is some small [sc. mutual] advantage between the domestic animals and man, and between animals themselves, for example, as Herodotus says, between the Egyptian plover and the crocodile ...³⁵

Some animals are friends for the sake of what is mutually advantageous. This entails that these animals have, at least to a small degree, an ability to perceptually recognise things as advantageous. If they did not, how could they cooperate for the sake of mutual advantage? Consider the example in this passage, the case of the Egyptian plover and its symbiotic relationship with crocodiles. As Herodotus recounts, this little bird can safely pick leeches out of a crocodile's open mouth, for the crocodile is happy with the plover's help and therefore doesn't eat it.³⁶

The crocodile and the plover are friends for the sake of mutual advantage. In order to form a "friendship" or to engage in cooperative behaviour, both the crocodile and the plover must see beyond their immediate pleasure or pain. The crocodile must be able to see beyond the immediate pleasure of eating the plover and the plover must see beyond the immediate danger of being in the mouth of a predator. Respectively, they must recognise perceptually the advantage of having the living bird in their mouth and of eating the crocodile's leeches.³⁷ This shows that humans are not the only animals who can perceptually recognise things as advantageous. Other animals can perceptually recognise things as advantageous too. It is hard to tell how far non-human animals can get in their grasp of the advantageous. Perhaps, their grasp is *de re* and not *de dicto*: it merely consists in an ability to reliably discriminate advantageous things. Presumably, non-human animals do not go as far as developing a fully fledged notion of advantage as distinct from pleasure. However, they seem able to forsake

³⁵φανερὸν δ' ἐκ τούτων ὅτι ἡ πρώτη φιλία ἢ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐστὶν ἀντιφιλία καὶ ἀντιπροαίρεσις πρὸς ἀλλήλους. ... αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀνθρώποις μόνον ὑπάρχει φιλία (μόνον γὰρ αἰσθάνεται προαιρέσεως)· αἱ δ' ἄλλαι καὶ ἐν τοῖς θηρίοις, καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον ἐπὶ μικρὸν τι φαίνεται ἐνυπάρχον καὶ πρὸς ἄνθρωπον τοῖς ἡμέροις καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα, οἷον τὸν τροχίλον φησὶν Ἡρόδοτος τῷ κροκοδείλῳ ... *EE* 1236b1–10.

³⁶Herodotus, *Historiae*, II, 68.

³⁷See *HA* 612a22–23, where the crocodile is described as not harming the plover because it *perceives* that the plover is beneficial to him (ὁ δ' ὠφελοῦμενος αἰσθάνεται καὶ οὐ βλάπτει).

immediate pleasure for some future advantage, which they might recognise as a greater pleasure, or even, perhaps, as a good distinct from pleasure.

Their perceptual recognition of advantageous things can also explain why, for Aristotle, some animal species are better at cooperating than others. As the case of the plover and the crocodile shows, the capacity to discriminate advantageous things perceptually explains or at least enables cooperative behaviour between different species. In the *History of Animals*, Aristotle explains cooperative behaviour between animals of the same species by introducing the notion of “political animal”:

The political [sc. animals] are all those which have some one common thing as a function: which makes not all the gregarious animals political. Such political animals are humans, bees, wasps, ants and cranes.³⁸

We are not the only political or social animals. What makes an animal political is having a common function with all the members of the same species, and some non-human animals have a common function too. Presumably, similarly to the case of inter-species cooperation, this kind of intra-species cooperation requires animals to recognise perceptually the common advantage. These animals are not merely gregarious (*agelaia*). They have a preliminary recognition of the advantage they get from cooperating, and can pursue this advantage instead of immediately available pleasures.

Animals can be political to different degrees. Whether an animal is more or less political is correlated with the development of its perceptual capacities, and in particular with the development of its memory:

When they can perceive, their lives will differ [sc. from the life of those who can't perceive] with respect to the pleasure they derive from sexual intercourse, and with respect to how they give birth and the methods they use to take care [sc. of the newborn]. Some animals, like plants, only procreate according to the seasons. Others, once they have procreated, busy themselves to get food to their young, and once they are done they separate themselves from [sc. their young] and have nothing to do with them any more. Others have more “comprehension” and have a share to more memory and live with their young on a more “political” footing.³⁹

³⁸ Πολιτικά δ' ἔστιν ὧν ἓν τι καὶ κοινὸν γίνεται πάντων τὸ ἔργον· ὅπερ οὐ πάντα ποιεῖ τὰ ἀγελαῖα. Ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπος, μέλιττα, σφήξ, μύρμηξ, γέρανός. *HA* 488a7–10.

³⁹ προσούσης δ' αἰσθήσεως ἤδη, περί τε τὴν ὀχείαν διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν διαφέρουσιν αὐτῶν οἱ βίοι, καὶ περὶ τοὺς τόκους καὶ τὰς ἐκτροφὰς τῶν τέκνων. Τὰ μὲν οὖν ἀπλῶς, ὥσπερ φυτὰ, κατὰ τὰς ὥρας ἀποτελεῖ τὴν οἰκείαν γένεσιν· τὰ δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰς τροφὰς ἐκπονεῖται τῶν τέκνων, ὅταν δ' ἀποτελέσῃ, χωρίζονται καὶ κοινωνίαν οὐδεμίαν ἔτι ποιῶνται· τὰ δὲ συνετώτερα καὶ κοινωνοῦντα μνήμης ἐπὶ πλέον καὶ πολιτικώτερον

In this passage, Aristotle compares animal and plant reproduction. He points out that the fact that animals have perception explains why they, unlike plants, can care for their offspring. He argues that to a higher “comprehension” (*sunesis*) and to a better memory corresponds the tendency to live a more “political” life. The idea seems to be that the more sophisticated its cognitive capacities are, the more likely an animal is to live in a “political” community with its offspring and, presumably, with other members of the same species.⁴⁰

Aristotle does not say much about the specific relationship between the development of memory and comprehension and an animal’s tendency to live in a community.⁴¹ It is clear that having good memory *enables* animals to live in a community, but it is unclear how it does so.

The connection between the ability to perceptually recognise the advantageous and the ability to cooperate can shed some light on the relationship between memory and communal life. It suggests the memory enables animals to live more politically or communally because it gives them better chances to recognise advantageous things perceptually. An animal with little memory can’t learn from experience, and experience is required to see what is advantageous for oneself and one’s community. Only animals that can retain memory of past successful feeding strategies can see that it is advantageous to seek food in a predator’s mouth. For similar reasons, memory is necessary to recognise the *communal* advantages of the family or the species. An animal with little memory wouldn’t be able to avoid feeding the same nestling twice, or to ward its eggs.⁴² It wouldn’t be able to recognize members of its family, and therefore wouldn’t be able to care and pursue what is advantageous for it and them. If distracted with immediate perceptual pleasures, such as immediately available food, it would abandon the care of its offspring, and would not be able to return to it. Hence, even though it is hard to tell whether having good memory leads animals to live in a community, we can explain why it makes them better able to live in a community.

χρῶνται τοῖς ἀπογόνους. *HA* 588b29–589a2. See also *HA* 612b20 and *HA* 621a22 where we find a fascinating discussion of how the swallow and the river-fish take care of their offspring.

⁴⁰It is difficult to reconstruct the relationship between the biological sense of political animal and political life and the sense that specifically relates to a life in the *polis*. Here, I focus on the biological sense without discussing how it relates to the human tendency to live in *poleis*. For the suggestion that they are related see Kullmann 1991, Cooper 1998a, Depew 1995.

⁴¹Comprehension, unlike memory, might be seen as posing a special problem, for it is a virtue of thought (see *NE* 1143a9–16, discussed in chapter 6.3), and therefore it is unclear how thought-less animals can have it. The problem, however, can be dispelled, for non-rational animals might have a non-rational equivalent of comprehension, which is analogically but not essentially similar to human comprehension (for this view see Sorabji 1993, pp. 13 ff. for discussion see Labarrière 2005, ch. 5, *de la Phronèsis Animale*).

⁴²*HA* 612b20 and *HA* 621a22.

Aristotle's ethical works and his works on natural science suggest that humans and some other animals can recognise advantageous things *perceptually*. The degree to which an animal will be able to perceptually recognise advantageous things depends on the limits of its memory. Furthermore, the development of an animal's ability to perceptually recognise advantageous things will be correlated to its ability to live on a social, or political, footing.

5.4 Musical Education and the Fine

For Aristotle, we are not the only animals who can perceptually recognise advantageous things. Our sense for the advantageous is however especially developed because we have good memory. But what about the fine? Unlike the advantageous, the fine seems to really be something only humans can perceive. Being able to grasp the fine is connected to specifically human virtues. For example, from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we know that non-human animals are not strictly speaking brave because they do not act for the sake of the fine, but on account of pleasure and pain.⁴³

In addition, the notion of *fineness* seems to be mostly at play in contexts outside the cognitive range of non-human animals. At *Metaphysics* 1078a31–b36, for example, Aristotle connects the notion of fineness to order, symmetry and determinateness, i.e. the kind of features that we find in sciences like geometry and mathematics.⁴⁴ This complexity might suggest that we can perceptually recognise something as fine only if thought expands our perceptual range. However, a study of musical education and moral education shows that we can learn to perceptually recognise fine things without thought's help. Aristotle believed, just as Plato did in the case of order, that we can develop the capacity to perceptually recognise fine things before we develop the capacity to think.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, morally good or virtuous people are described as similar to musical people:

The good person, in so far as he is good, rejoices at virtuous actions and is pained at bad actions, in the same way as the musical person is pleased

⁴³In *NE* 1116b31–1117a3, *EE* 1231a1 and *NE* 1104b30–ff., quoted above, Aristotle implies that only perception of the pleasant is common between humans and animals. If my discussion of the advantageous is persuasive, however, it suggests that some animals can recognise advantageous things perceptually too.

⁴⁴On the connection between the fine and order, see below, Cooper 1998b and Richardson Lear 2006.

by fine melodies, but pained by the bad ones.⁴⁵

The musical person and the virtuous person are even more intimately related than this quote suggests. We can draw some analogies between the way in which they respectively rejoice at virtuous actions and fine melodies, and we can also count musical education as directly contributing to moral education.

The moral importance of musical education is discussed in the *Politics VIII*, and it is summarised in a very compressed passage:

Since then it happens that music is a pleasure, and virtue is about rejoicing and loving and hating rightly, it is clear that there is nothing that we should learn and to which we should habituate ourselves more than correctly distinguishing and rejoicing at good characters and fine actions.⁴⁶

It is easy to see why we need both to learn to discriminate or to distinguish fine actions and characters and also to habituate ourselves to rejoice at them. According to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in order to become virtuous, we need both to learn to recognise and do virtuous actions, and also to habituate ourselves to take pleasure in acting virtuously. However, the argument for the educational power of music is not spelled out in detail in this passage: Aristotle simply says that since virtue is about having the correct desires and aversions, we should habituate ourselves to recognise and rejoice at fine actions and good characters. He adds that music is a pleasure, implying that this is somehow related to its educational role, but he does not explain how.

In the following lines the suggestion that musical education contributes to virtue is clarified. First, Aristotle explains that music is a natural pleasure, or naturally pleasant. The “common pleasure” that we feel while listening to music is shared by all, independently of whether they have reached the age of reason or not, and it is even felt by animals.⁴⁷ Then he suggests that music has a special status: in music, but not in painting and sculpture, we find likenesses (*homoiōmata*) or imitations (*mimēmata*) of

⁴⁵ὁ γὰρ σπουδαῖος, ἢ σπουδαῖος, ταῖς κατ’ ἀρετὴν πράξεσι χαίρει, ταῖς δ’ ἀπὸ κακίας δυσχεραίνει, καθάπερ ὁ μουσικὸς τοῖς καλοῖς μέλεσιν ἤδεται, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς φαύλοις λυπεῖται. *NE* 1170a8–11.

⁴⁶ἐπεὶ δὲ συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὴν μουσικὴν τῶν ἡδέων, τὴν δ’ ἀρετὴν περὶ τὸ χαίρειν ὀρθῶς καὶ φιλεῖν καὶ μισεῖν, δεῖ δηλονότι μανθάνειν καὶ συνειθίζεσθαι μηθὲν οὕτως ὡς τὸ κρίνειν ὀρθῶς καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν ἦθεσι καὶ ταῖς καλοῖς πράξεσιν. *Pol.* 1340a15–17. See the Platonic parallel at *Rep.* 401b–402c.

⁴⁷*Pol.* 1340b17 and *Pol.* 1341a16. See also *HA* 611b26–31 on hinds being so pleased by the music played by the hunters that they lay down on the grass, thus becoming an easy prey. Cf. *EE* 1231a1 ff. on thesis that animals can be pleased by the fineness of music only in exceptional cases.

character.⁴⁸ More specifically, in rhythm (*rhythmos*) and in melody (*melos*) themselves there are true likenesses of character.⁴⁹

A special similarity between music and characters lies at the basis of the idea that in music, and not in other art forms like painting, we find imitations or likenesses (*homoiōmata* or *mimēmata*) of character. According to Aristotle, as I will show below, we find likenesses of characters and actions in music because music is progressive, because it develops through time. There are two further similarities between music, actions and characters in their development through time: first, they are called fine for similar reasons; second, they need to be enjoyed and pursued for their own sake. These similarities explain music's role in Aristotle's moral education.

Music's progressive nature is among its most noticeable distinguishing features. Musical pieces necessarily develop through time, unlike statues and paintings which are static. This distinguishing feature is especially evident in the elements of the musical piece where Aristotle locates likenesses of character: *melody* and *rhythm*.⁵⁰ *Harmonia*, melody (*melos*) and rhythm (*rhythmos*) are the three fundamental components of an Ancient Greek musical piece. Melody and rhythm differ from *harmonia* precisely because they are progressive and develop through time.

Harmonia means first and foremost tuning, or the different tension and organization of the strings of a lyre or *kithara*. *Harmonia* also has a secondary use, whereby it means mode. A mode is a set of distinctive intervals in a scale, upon which different melodies can be constructed.⁵¹ *Harmonia*, in both cases, furnishes the static structure upon which the composer or the performer can base their composition or execution.

Unlike *harmonia*, melody is a movement (descending or ascending, jumpy or following the scale step by step) through the set structure of the *harmonia*. Melody,

⁴⁸Presumably, music shares this special status with drama, but drama is not the focus of the *Politics VIII* (see the note below). Throughout *Politics VIII*, Aristotle uses the terms ὁμοίωμα and the term μιμήματα as synonyms (see e.g. *Pol.* 1340a26 ff. and Halliwell 1990, p. 491).

⁴⁹*Pol.* 1340a29–39. Compare with Plato, who finds imitations (*mimēmata*) of character and sisters (*adelphe*) of character in crafts like embroidery, weaving and architecture in *Rep.* 401a1 ff. Aristotle implies that the likenesses of character are to be found in instrumental music (melodies and rhythms), and not only in music accompanied by words. See *Pol.* 1340a14–b26, Ford 2004 and Barker 2005, p. 99 and ff. In this respect, Aristotle's account is similar to Plato's in the *Republic*, but differs from the *Laws*, where the focus is on *mousikē* as including the art of dancing and singing (*chōreia*). See *Rep.* 398c1–d9 and *Laws* 665a–c and *Laws* book II and VII. For an account of the educational powers of instrumental music in the *Republic* see Schofield 2010 and Barker 2005, pp. 19–57. See also Pelosi 2010 for a study of the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

⁵⁰See Barker 2005, pp. 108 ff. My argument is indebted to Barker's analysis of the similarity between actions and melodies, and differs from his view because it focuses on the fact that what matters for Aristotle is that actions, characters and music are called "fine" for similar reasons.

⁵¹West 1992, pp. 178 ff and Barker 2005, pp. 21 ff.

then, has a progressive nature.⁵²

Ancient Greek rhythm drew upon the metric of verses, and it was based on the binary opposition between “short” and “long” syllables. The division between the two was probably very strict and well defined, with the long syllable lasting twice as long as the short one.⁵³ Thus rhythm, similarly to *harmonia*, gives a fixed structure to the otherwise confused movements of the *melos*.⁵⁴ Yet, unlike *harmonia*, Ancient Greek rhythm has a progressive aspect. Not only can it structure the pattern of the musical movement, but it can also give the *tempo*.⁵⁵ What makes melody and rhythm, as opposed to *harmonia*, especially similar to character might therefore be their progressive nature.

The intuition that likenesses and imitations of character are found in music because of its progressive nature is confirmed by the *Problems*:⁵⁶

Why does what is heard, alone of perceptible objects, possess character?
For, even when it is without words, nonetheless melody possesses character.
But colour, smell or flavour don't. Or it is because that which is heard alone
has movement? Not, however, the movement in us to which the sound gives
rise (for such movement is also related to the other [sc. perceptible objects])
... but we perceive the movement which follows such and such a sound.

⁵²West 1992, pp. 190 ff and Aristides Quintilianus *De Musica* II, 21, cf. p. 16.18–17.2, p. 81.4–6, p. 130.2, Ptolemy *Harmonics* 2. 12. See Barker 1990, p. 341 n. 96, p. 418, pp. 430 ff., p. 483, p. 531.

⁵³West 1992, pp. 129 ff. Ancient Greek metric and rhythmic were however distinct, and some of the most important sources (like Aristoxenus' work) do not discuss metrical analysis at length. In some cases, rhythmicians and metricians used a completely different terminology and classification for the same measures (see Aristides Quintilianus *De Musica* I, p. 38. 5 and West 1992, pp. 137 ff. for discussion). Aristides Quintilianus also discusses the approach of rhythmicians who analyse rhythm separately from metre at *De Musica* I, p. 38.15 ff. For Aristoxenus' *Elementa Rhythmica* see L. Pearson 1990.

⁵⁴Aristides Quintilianus, *De Musica* I, 31. 10–13, trans. Barker 1990, p. 434.

⁵⁵West 1992, pp. 158 ff. See the also *Problems* XIX. 38 for rhythm as a movement.

⁵⁶Even if we can't prove that Aristotle was the author of these texts, it seems impossible to deny the similarity between the views in the *Problems* XIX 27 and 29 and in the *Politics* VIII. In both texts, likenesses of characters are to be found in *melos*, rather than *harmonia*. Both texts suggest that there is a difference in the educational powers of music and the other arts (on these points, see Anderson 1980, p. 79). See Gevaert and Vollgraff 1901, pp. xvii ff. for the thesis that *Problem* 27 and 29 in *Problems* XIX are by Aristotle. See d'Eichthal and Reinach 1900, for the view that they are not. The first attribution of this book of the *Problems* to Aristotle is by Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* I. xi. Barker 1990, p. 85 ff. suggests that the *Problems* XIX were written by Aristotle's students as a record of his research and as an aid to further enquiry in the late fourth or early third century. Louis 1993, p. 94 ff. agrees and argues that the musical problems were collected together at a later stage (hence the discrepancies between e.g. *Probl.* XIX 7 and 37). Marengi 1957 and Marengi 1966 defend the authenticity (or at least the Aristotelian spirit) of the musical *Problems* and their connection with the acoustic problems. For further arguments in support of using the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* as aids to explain Aristotle's views when they do not contradict the authentic texts see also Van der Eijk 2005 and Forster 1928.

This movement has a likeness [sc. of characters] both in the rhythms and in the melodic order of the high and low notes, but not in the mixture. For symphony doesn't possess character. ... These movements are connected with actions (*praktikai*), and actions are indicative of character.⁵⁷

In this passage, the emphasis on the progressive nature of melodies is even stronger, and supplemented with a clear focus on the progressive nature or on the “movement” (*kinēsis*) of rhythm.⁵⁸ Melody and rhythm are movements because whenever a perceiving subject interacts with them she undergoes some kind of physical alteration (that happens in any case of perception). Melody and rhythm, in addition, are movements because they flow and change through time. They are perceptible successions of different, ordered, notes or durations.

Not only are melody and rhythm movements, but they are also *praktikai*, i.e. connected with actions. The connection between melody, rhythm and actions requires further clarification. When Aristotle uses the adjective *praktikos*, he often means that whatever is qualified as *praktikos* leads, in some way or other, to action.⁵⁹ But can melody and rhythm be *praktikoi* in that sense? do they make us act? Another passage of the *Problems* suggests that *praktikos* is used here with a slightly different meaning:⁶⁰

Why do rhythms and melodies, which are voice, resemble characters, whereas savours do not, nor yet colours and odours? Is it because they are movements, as actions also are? Now activity possesses and produces character, but savours and colours do not produce it equally.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Διὰ τί τὸ ἀκουστὸν μόνον ἦθος ἔχει τῶν αἰσθητῶν· καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ἡ ἄνευ λόγου μέλος, ὅμως ἔχει ἦθος· ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ χρῶμα οὐδὲ ἡ ὀσμὴ οὐδὲ ὁ χυμὸς ἔχει. ἢ ὅτι κίνησιν ἔχει μόνον οὐχί, ἦν ὁ ψόφος ἡμᾶς κινεῖ· τοιαύτη μὲν γὰρ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει· ... ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐπομένης τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ψόφῳ αἰσθανόμεθα κινήσεως. αὕτη δὲ ἔχει ὁμοιότητα ἔν τε τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν φθόγγων τάξει τῶν ὀξέων καὶ βαρέων, οὐκ ἐν τῇ μίξει. ἀλλ' ἡ συμφωνία οὐκ ἔχει ἦθος. ... αἱ δὲ κινήσεις αὗται πρακτικαὶ εἰσιν, αἱ δὲ πράξεις ἦθους σημασία ἐστίν. *Prob. XIX27*. Translations of the *Problems* are based, sometimes loosely, on Mayhew 2011.

⁵⁸ The view that melodies are movements based on static structures is developed by Aristotle's disciple Aristoxenus in his *Elementa Harmonica* II 34–35 (Da Rios 1954, pp. 43–44).

⁵⁹ See for example *NE* 1140a4 on how *phronēsis* is *praktikē*.

⁶⁰ See on this very same point Barker 2005, pp. 109–110.

⁶¹ Διὰ τί οἱ ῥυθμοὶ καὶ τὰ μέλη φωνῆ οὕσα ἤθεσιν ἔοικεν, οἱ δὲ χυμοὶ οὐ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὰ χρώματα καὶ αἱ ὀσμαι· ἢ ὅτι κινήσεις εἰσιν ὥσπερ καὶ αἱ πράξεις· ἦδη δὲ ἡ μὲν ἐνέργεια ἠθικὸν καὶ ποιεῖ ἦθος, οἱ δὲ χυμοὶ καὶ τὰ χρώματα οὐ ποιοῦσιν ὁμοίως. *Prob. XIX. 29*. The idea that actions and melodies “produce” character can suggest either that they resemble or even represent character or that they instil it in the listener. Here, the difference between objects of vision and taste and objects of hearing in producing character is one of degree. This doesn't entail that the passage is in tension with *Pol.* 1340a29–39, where Aristotle denies that objects of vision, taste and touch are likenesses of character, but admits that they might to some small extent indicate character (in so far as they are *sēmeia* but not *homoioēmata* of character) and influence character.

This passage suggests that melody and rhythm are *praktikoi* because they are similar to actions. They are similar to actions because, like actions, they are movements. Actions, melodies and rhythms resemble and produce character because they have a progressive nature.

The *Problems* give us a fuller picture of the similarities between music and character. Music is similar to character and to actions that produce character because it is progressive, because it is a movement. The similarity between musical movements and actions is the easiest to grasp. Musical movements involve orderly successions of high, low, long and short notes. This orderly succession makes them similar to actions: complex actions especially (like, say, saving a drowning child) involve the orderly temporal succession of different components.

But what about characters? Characters, unlike actions, are states (*hexeis*), and notably states which are stable over time.⁶² Yet, in the *Prob. XIX. 27*, likenesses of characters are not found in static concordance or “symphony”, i.e. in the simultaneous and static playing of two or more notes. Rather, they are found in the successions of notes or durations. Hence, characters have to be understood here as dispositions displayed in one’s behaviour and in one’s feelings, and not as un-displayed dispositions. One’s character is activated during one’s life in a orderly variety of actions, affections and desires. This is why we can find “likenesses of character” only in a progressive form of art.⁶³

These similarities in the orderly progressive development of actions, characters and music are at the basis of Aristotle’s claim that in melodies themselves there are imitations and likenesses of characters. The fact that melodies, rhythms, actions and characters involve this complex order in variety in their temporal development is especially important for musical education. It implies that there are similarities between what counts as a *fine* melody or rhythm and what counts as a *fine* action or a *fine* character. Aristotle’s notion of “the fine” (*to kalon*) is often, if not always, correlated with order (*taxis*).⁶⁴ This suggests that the fineness of an action, character

⁶²*NE* 1105b20.

⁶³For another context in which it is natural to take the word *ēthos* to indicate displayed character dispositions as opposed to dispositions which are not activated see *Rhet.* 1356a37 ff. and *Rhet.* 1377b21–1378a6. In these passages, Aristotle argues that the character (*ēthos*) the rhetorician displays during his speech can function as a means of persuasion.

⁶⁴*NE* 1078a36–b1; cf. *EE* 1218a21–3 and Richardson Lear 2006. Spelling out the exact nature of the relationship between fineness and order is difficult. The notions are surely connected, but it is hard to tell whether fineness or order is explanatorily basic. Without tackling this difficult question, all I argue here is that there is a similarity in the specific kind of order that fine actions, fine characters and fine melodies (or fine rhythms) display. This suggests that there is a similarity in the specific way in which actions, melodies and characters can be recognised as fine. Aristotle trades

or a musical movement is connected to the “order in variety” they manifest in their temporal development. Whether fineness is exactly the same property when found in music and in action is hard to determine. Aristotle does not say enough, in both contexts, to allow us to extrapolate a definition of fineness. However, as I argue in what follows, fine music, fine actions and fine characters have, at the very least, a lot in common. They require the same kind of appropriate orderly temporal succession of a variety of appropriate components.

There is no discussion in the *Politics* of the characteristics of fine melodies and rhythms. Aristotle does not dwell on the characteristics of fine melodies because he thinks that “musicians and philosophers who happen to know a lot about music” have already discussed them sufficiently.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, we have reason to think that the fine melodies used for education are orderly because they are kept within the range of intervals of a single *harmonia*, or a single mode. Order, in this context, is partially a matter of involving the right components, and no alien components. At *Pol.* 1142a25, modulating melodies which include chromatisms (*parakechrōsmena*) are described as deviant (*parekbaseis*). At *Pol.* 1341a18 and ff., the flute, a modulating instrument, is banned from educational uses.⁶⁶ By analogy, it is plausible to think that fine rhythms are orderly because they follow a specific metrical unit or a specific ratio.⁶⁷

In the same way, a fine action has to involve the right components, or the right temporal sub-stretches. Fine child-saving, for example, involves swimming fast and performing first aid procedures, as opposed to (say) swimming stylishly and telling the child off for her imprudence.

Fine displayed character dispositions like bravery must have the right components too. A brave person will display her disposition in a variety of different ways. Depending on the circumstances, she will fear certain things and not others: for example, she won’t fear loss of reputation but she will fear death. She will be “eager when in action, but quiet before action”.⁶⁸

In order to be distinctive of fine melodies, rhythms, actions and characters, their orderly arrangement must be qualified further. It is not enough to involve the right components: a good, or appropriate arrangement of the components is also needed.

on this similarity both in the *Politics VIII* and in *NE* 1170a8–11.

⁶⁵*Pol.* 1341b25 Aristotle is perhaps referring to some of his students.

⁶⁶At *Rep.* 399d1–5, Plato bans the flute precisely because it is a modulating instrument.

⁶⁷Neither Plato nor Aristotle seem to give us specific indications on which rhythms are fine. See *Rep.* 398d and *Rep.* 400b1 ff., where Plato simply says that the rhythm should follow the words and defers to Damon on the appropriate and inappropriate rhythms. On appropriate and inappropriate rhythms in speech for Aristotle see *Rhetoric XXX.* 8.

⁶⁸*NE* 1116a8–9.

Thus, some modes and rhythmic patterns but not others are appropriate for educational and fine melodies and rhythms.⁶⁹ Similarly, the arrangement of the temporal development of a fine action is appropriate for the circumstances and for the action's goal, a goal which must itself be worthwhile: in a fine case of child-saving, swimming precedes and does not follow performing a CPR.⁷⁰ In the same way, the complex variety of actions and passions displayed by a fine character state like bravery does not follow a random arrangement, but an appropriate order: the brave person is "whoever stands firm against the right things and fears the right things, for the right end, at the right time, and is correspondingly confident".⁷¹ This feature is common to all virtues in so far as they are "means".

The temporal development of fine melodies, fine actions and fine characters is distinctively characterized by the appropriate orderly arrangement of the right components. Fine actions, characters and melodies have, in addition, another distinctive feature: for Aristotle, fine melodies should be enjoyed for their own sake and fine actions and characters should be enjoyed and pursued for their own sake.

The importance of the right motives for performing fine actions emerges if we compare them to the performance of good productions (*poiēseis*). The performance of actions (*praxeis*) is, for Aristotle, different from the performance of productions (*poiēseis*). Productions need to be aimed at something other than themselves, and actions need not. While the house builder aims at something other than her performance of house building (i.e., the house), someone who performs a virtuous action needn't have an aim other than the action itself. The builder has the goal of producing a good house. For the person who is performing an action, the excellent action itself is the goal.⁷² In this respect, our motives in pursuing virtuous actions are similar to what Aristotle takes to be the right motives in listening to musical performances. We should listen to fine music for its own sake, and not for the sake of, say, relaxation.⁷³

It is plausible to think that this similarity led Aristotle to the thesis that taking the appropriate pleasure in fine musical performances is similar to taking the appropriate pleasure in fine actions. *Listening* finely is remarkably similar to *acting* finely or

⁶⁹*Pol.* 1341b33–1342b18.

⁷⁰Richardson Lear 2006, p. 120 connects the order and symmetry of fine actions to the fact that their sub-stretches are proportioned to each other and to the task they aim at, Cooper 1998b, p. 274 argues that the order and symmetry relate to the fact that the action responds to all the concerns affected by the action.

⁷¹*NE* 1115b17–19.

⁷²*NE* 1140b7 ff. See further Whiting 2002a.

⁷³*Pol.* 1338a10 ff., *Pol.* 1139b35–1140a5, *Pol.* 1342a19–ff. See also *MM* 1197a8–11 for a possibly related analogy between playing well and acting well.

virtuously: in both cases, having the wrong motives prevents the activity from being done finely. Since not all melodies, rhythms and actions are fine, merely enjoying the performance for its own sake is not enough to listen and act finely. To listen and act finely, one must perform actions and listen to melodies and rhythms that meet certain independent requirements. For example, they must follow an appropriate orderly arrangement. But listening to a fine melody or performing a fine action, in order to be finely done, needs to meet a further requirement: it needs to be done and enjoyed for its own sake.

Although Aristotle's account is certainly dependent on the accepted views on what counted as listening well and what did not, he does manage to provide it with some philosophical grounding. He reports that "the ancients" thought that music is important because it teaches us to spend our free time well, i.e. *scholazein kalōs*.⁷⁴ In order to be able to spend our free time well, we need to be trained not only in disciplines that are useful towards money making, political activities and household management, but also in disciplines that are practised for their own sake.⁷⁵ And music is precisely an example of such a discipline.

However, not all types of musical performances are listened to for their own sake. Most tunes are played for the relaxation and amusement of the "uneducated masses".⁷⁶ This prevents their performance from being done and listened to finely, as well as making, according to Aristotle, their performers and listeners "vulgar" (*banausoi*). Aristotle's comments on "the many" and those who engage in productive work are the effect of a mistaken prejudice, but the crucial point of his views on musical and moral education can be defended independently of such prejudice. Perceiving the fine is surely difficult and requires a specific training. This view need not be accompanied by the obviously wrong assumption that most people (women, slaves and productive workers) cannot undergo the relevant kind of training. Nor need it be accompanied by the view that performances for the sake of the listeners' enjoyment are vulgar.

Just as listening to music finely in the *Politics VIII* involves listening to music for its own sake, so also acting finely in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Rhetoric* requires doing virtuous actions for their own sake. In the *Rhetoric I. 9*, the illustrative (*charin paradeigmatos*) account of fine actions and characters begins by connecting the fine to what is chosen for its own sake:

⁷⁴*Pol.* 1337b30-32.

⁷⁵*Pol.* 1338a13 ff.

⁷⁶*Pol.* 1342a28 ff. and *Pol.* 1342a16ff. See also *Pol.* 1341a10 ff.

The fine is what being chosen for its own sake is praiseworthy, and what being good is pleasant because it's good.⁷⁷

The fine is praiseworthy when or because it is chosen for its own sake, and pleasant because it is good. Fine actions commonly have the following characteristics: they are good absolutely, they are rewarded with honour rather than money, but honour is not their goal. They are good for the performer, and also in their own right.⁷⁸ This illustrative list suggests that acting finely must meet at least a basic criterion: it must be done for its own sake, and not for external incentives like monetary rewards, or mere self interest.

The idea that acting finely is done for its own sake confirmed by the *Nicomachean Ethics*. One of the conditions for acting virtuously or finely is that the agent performs the action for its own sake, and performing an action for its own sake is the same as acting for the sake of the fine.⁷⁹ This requirement distinguishes acting finely from producing well. It also distinguishes acting finely from some instances of acting viciously. Good productive performances are oriented towards the achievement of an external goal, i.e. the product of the production. Similarly, acting viciously is not necessarily done for its own sake, but can be aimed at an external goal such as apparent pleasure, fame or power.⁸⁰ In addition, the fact that acting finely is oriented to an internal goal distinguishes it from some of its close cousins: performances that might seem to be done finely but really aren't, because they are guided by the wrong motives. For example, seemingly brave actions for the sake of a monetary reward, or for the sake of public honours.⁸¹

⁷⁷καλὸν μὲν οὖν ἔστιν ὃ ἂν δι' αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν ὄν ἐπαινετὸν ἦ, ἢ ὃ ἂν ἀγαθὸν ὄν ἡδὺ ἦ, ὅτι ἀγαθόν. *Rhet.* 1366a33–34.

⁷⁸*Rhet.* 1366b35 ff. Irwin 1985 and Irwin 2011 takes the account in the *Rhetoric* and the *Ethics* to suggest that fine actions are done for the sake of communal interest. The analogy between acting finely and playing finely, however, suggests that acting finely is not necessarily done for the sake of the common good. See further Rogers 1993 and Taylor 2006, p. 92 fn. 12 for a similar critique of Irwin's view.

⁷⁹*NE* 1105a30–b3 and *NE* 1115b12–13.

⁸⁰Aristotle doesn't say much about vicious actions, it seems plausible to believe that they are valued by their performers for an external end such as pleasure, or fame, or power. Thus, vicious actions are not, unlike fine actions, necessarily done for their own sake, even though some vicious actions might be. On vicious actions, see further Brodie 1991, pp. 90–91, Irwin 2001 and Müller 2015b.

⁸¹See e.g. *Ne* 1116a16, and in particular his discussion of political courage. Hitz 2012, p. 271 is right, I think, in arguing that civic or political courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is different from civic courage in *Rep.* 429c. Civic courage in the *Republic* seems to be immature because it doesn't involve knowledge, but mere true belief, about what is to be feared. For Aristotle, political courage is inferior because it involves acting for the wrong motives (for fear of punishments or externally bestowed honour, for example). A better analogue would be, perhaps, the appearance of virtue or brutish virtue discussed in *Phaedo* 69b.

The right motives matter for virtuous character states as well as for virtuous actions and fine music. Being oriented to the right goals distinguishes virtuous characters from their close cousins: real bravery is different from bravery for the sake of honour and bravery for the sake of fear. The really brave person acts for the sake of bravery itself, whereas bravery for the sake of fear or honour is governed by external goals.⁸²

The *Politics* and the *Problems* emphasise three similarities between music, actions and characters: actions, characters, melodies and rhythm are alike in their progressive development; fine actions, characters, melodies and rhythms need to display a similar order in variety; listening well to a melody, acting finely, and displaying correctly a virtuous character require the right motives or pleasures. These similarities between melodies, rhythms, actions and characters are important for the educational powers of music because they capture some distinctive features of virtuous actions and characters.

The appropriate order in their progressive development and the appropriate motives differentiate virtuous actions done finely from good productions, from vicious actions and from good actions done from the wrong motives: good productions are aimed at an external goal, and so are good actions done for the wrong motives; vicious actions do not meet the formal requirement of following an appropriate order (though they might follow an inappropriate orderly arrangement) and needn't be done for their own sake.

The same features are distinctive of virtuous characters. The orderly nature of virtuous characters differentiates them from vicious characters. A vicious disposition presents a complex variety of actions and feelings, some of which might even be the same kind of feelings or actions displayed at times by the virtuous person. Among these “shared” feelings and actions, Aristotle mentions fear and facing death in *EE* 1229b35 ff. But a vicious disposition is different from a virtuous disposition in that its components are displayed in an arrangement so inappropriate that it leads to self destruction.⁸³ The right motives matter for virtuous character states too: they distinguish real virtues from virtues for the sake of honour or fear.

5.5 Musical Education as Perceptual Training

The three similarities between music, actions and characters I described in the previous section can guide our interpretation of music's educational function. They can explain why musical education teaches us both to recognise fine actions and characters and

⁸²*NE* 1116a17–b3. See Hitz 2012, 271 ff. and Richardson Lear 2005, pp. 154–55.

⁸³*NE* 1166b7–29.

also to correctly rejoice at them. Musical students can learn to recognise fine characters and actions because these characters and actions are similar to fine melodies and rhythms.⁸⁴ This explains why Aristotle envisages musical education as a kind of recognitional training:

There is no doubt that whether someone himself participates in a performance makes a great difference to the development of certain qualities. For if people do not participate in performances, then one thing which is impossible or difficult is for them to become excellent judges of them.⁸⁵

Thus, in the first place, since in order to discriminate it is necessary to take part to the performances, for this reason they should play while young, and abandon the performances once they get old, and they should be able to discriminate (*krinein*) fine things and rejoice correctly in virtue of what they learnt when young.⁸⁶

In this passages, Aristotle argues that young children should participate to musical performances and learn to play musical instruments. The reason why participating to performances and even playing is important is because it helps young children to learn to recognize fine melodies in their succession of ascending, descending or jumpy notes. Children learn to grasp the melodies' appropriate orderly temporal development. Since fine melodies are similar to fine actions and characters in their appropriate orderly temporal development, the recognitional skills acquired in the context of musical education are transferable to the context of moral education. If fineness in action and

⁸⁴On a widespread interpretation, music is educational because it transmits emotions (see Woodruff 1992, p. 91, Woerther 2008, p. 100, Barker 2005, pp. 103–5). It is however unlikely that Aristotle associated music's educational function with its affective powers only. Music, especially if it is not accompanied by words, moves us emotionally without transmitting the intentional content of emotions. It can make us feel, say, angry and combative without making us think or imagine a slight and a pleasant revenge. But these contentless emotions cannot train us not to feel angry at the wrong time and towards the wrong people. Hence, they could not help us to acquire the correct character disposition, as Aristotle understands it, with regards to anger or any other emotion (see e.g. *NE IV*. 5 and Brüllmann 2013, pp. 368–372 for the same critique). For similar reasons, the thesis that musical education provides us with representations or paradigms of fine actions and characters is implausible. Instrumental music, or music without words, seems unable to represent or mimic actions and characters in this way (*contra* Sherman 1989, pp. 183 ff. and Hitz 2012, pp. 298 ff.).

⁸⁵οὐκ ἄδηλον δὴ ὅτι πολλὴν ἔχει διαφορὰν πρὸς τὸ γίγνεσθαι ποιούς τινας, ἐάν τις αὐτὸς κοινωνῇ τῶν ἔργων· ἐν γὰρ τι τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἢ χαλεπῶν ἐστὶ μὴ κοινωνήσαντας τῶν ἔργων κριτὰς γενέσθαι σπουδαίους. *Pol.* 1340b20–25.

⁸⁶πρῶτον μὲν γάρ, ἐπεὶ τοῦ κρίνειν χάριν μετέχειν δεῖ τῶν ἔργων, διὰ τοῦτο χρὴ νέους μὲν ὄντας χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἔργοις, πρεσβυτέρους δὲ γενομένους τῶν μὲν ἔργων ἀφεῖσθαι, δύνασθαι δὲ τὰ καλὰ κρίνειν καὶ χαίρειν ὁρθῶς διὰ τὴν μάθησιν τὴν γενομένην ἐν τῇ νεότητι. *Pol.* 1340b35–39.

character is, at least in some relevant respects, similar to fineness in music, learning to recognise the latter can be a way to learn to recognise the former.

Aristotle uses the verb *krinein* to indicate the type of grasp that allows trained musical students to discriminate fine music, actions and characters.⁸⁷ *Krinein* and its cognates are used to indicate both perceptual and intellectual grasps.⁸⁸ Since musical training is directed to children, however, we have a reason to suppose that it won't be directed toward the thinking part of the souls. Children's intellect is not developed. The rational part of their soul will emerge only later in life.⁸⁹ For this reason, musical education must engage first and foremost with the non-rational or perceptual part of the soul.⁹⁰

Exactly how musical education engages with the non-rational part is open to speculation, for Aristotle doesn't explain the details of its cognitive workings. All we know is that it teaches us to recognise fine melodies, actions and characters. Perhaps, what matters is that recognising a fine melody involves engaging with a particular melodic movement. Without this engagement, the relevant recognition cannot occur: our sensitivity to the order of a melody must follow its particular temporal development. It is enough for us to follow this orderly development perceptually, and we don't need to understand a universal explanation as to why some melodies and not others are fine. Thus, there is some connection between the sensitivity to particulars that musical expertise and virtue require.⁹¹

Aristotle argues that musical education is a kind of perceptual-recognitional training, but he does not explain precisely how it works. However, he explicitly argues that musical education teaches us to perceptually recognise fine music and fine actions,

⁸⁷*Pol.* 1340b35–39 and *Pol.* 1340a15–17.

⁸⁸*DA* 418a14, *DA* 424a5, *DA* 425b21, *DA* 427a20, *DA* 428a3.

⁸⁹*NE* 1100a1, *Rhet.* 1384b23 and *Pol.* 1334b6–28.

⁹⁰Here, Aristotle seems to follow Plato, see for example *Laws* 664e3–8 and *Rep.* 401a5 ff. On the importance of a trained perception for discriminating *harmonia* and *rhythmos* see also *Laws* 670b2–3.

⁹¹For the connection between practical knowledge and knowledge of particulars, see *NE* 1141b8–b20. Plato makes analogous considerations in *Laws* 667b–670e. For Aristotle's disciple Aristoxenus music, unlike (say) geometry, requires perceptual training:

Since this [sc. static and progressive] is the nature of music it is necessary to habituate perception and thought to discriminate finely what is static and what moves in the harmonised melodies.

τοιαύτην δ' ἐχούσης φύσιν τῆς μουσικῆς ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἐν τοῖς περὶ τὸ ἡρμοσμένον συνηθίσθηναι τὴν τε διάνοιαν καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν καλῶς κρίνειν τὸ τε μένον καὶ τὸ κινούμενον.
Elementa Harmonica II 34, 25 ff. (Da Rios 1954, 44, 3 ff.)

Here Aristoxenus might be expanding Aristotle's views on the importance of training perception to discriminate the movements of fine music.

and that it leads us to take pleasure in fine actions and fine characters for their own sake:

Someone who is accustomed to feel pleasure and pain in things that are alike [sc. to the real things] is close to someone who has the same attitude toward the real things. For example, if someone enjoys contemplating the image of something for no other reason than its shape, he will necessarily take pleasure as well in contemplating the thing itself whose image he is contemplating.⁹²

Taking pleasure in a mere likeness leads us to take pleasure in the “real thing”. Applying this principle to fine melodies and rhythms, we obtain that someone who is accustomed to enjoying them for their own sake will enjoy for their own sake the “real thing” they are similar to: fine actions and fine characters. Since music is naturally pleasant, enjoying fine music for its own sake leads us to take the appropriate pleasure in it and what it resembles.⁹³

Musical education cannot lead us all the way toward virtue. It cannot really teach us to act finely or virtuously and to develop a fully blown virtuous character. Recognising fine actions and enjoying or pursuing them for their own sake is not sufficient by Aristotle’s own standards for acting finely or virtuously. Other conditions have to be satisfied: the virtuous action has to be chosen knowingly and from a stable and virtuous character state (*NE II. 3*). For example, enkratic actions might display the appropriate order in variety and be done for their own sake. Yet, they are not done virtuously because the agent who performs them is still conflicted.

Even if this is right, it doesn’t undermine the idea that musical education can aid moral education. Musical education teaches us a perceptual recognitional skill that helps us to spot at least some of the features that characterise fine actions and characters. It also teaches us to take pleasure in fine actions and characters for their own sake. Thus, it gives us at least a starting point to learn to be good. In addition, it demonstrates that human beings, if suitably trained, can learn to perceptually recognise fine things before they develop the ability to think and to grasp the notion of fineness.

⁹²ὁ δ’ ἐν τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἐθισμὸς τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ χαίρειν ἐγγύς ἐστι τῷ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχειν τρόπον οἷον εἴ τις χαίρει τὴν εἰκόνα τινὸς θεώμενος μὴ δι’ ἄλλην αἰτίαν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν μορφήν αὐτῆν, ἀναγκαῖον τούτῳ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τὴν θεωρίαν, οὗ τὴν εἰκόνα θεωρεῖ, ἡδεῖαν εἶναι. *Pol.* 1340a23–28.

⁹³*Pol.* 1340b20–25.

5.6 Conclusion

Humans grasp their goals under the guise of the fine, the pleasant and the advantageous. They can grasp something as fine, advantageous or pleasant both perceptually and intellectually. A perceptual grasp of advantageous things is shared between human and some non-human political animals. The better their memory, the better their chance to have a developed sense for the advantageous and to live socially. Perceptually recognising fine things is peculiarly human, but it does not require the rational part to expand the cognitive range of the non-rational part. It requires perceptual training, a training similar to the one that musical education can provide.

The view that perceptual training is required in order to acquire the ability to recognise fine things perceptually has far-reaching consequences for Aristotle's account of moral education. Being able to recognise fine actions and characters perceptually is of paramount importance in order to become virtuous. People who haven't "tasted" the fine are unable to live a virtuous life, and can't be persuaded to engage in a learning process that will lead them to live a virtuous life.⁹⁴

Aristotle notoriously distinguishes between two kinds of virtues achieved by a morally educated soul, intellectual virtues (*dianoētikai aretai*) and virtues of character (*ēthikai aretai*).⁹⁵ This distinction is related to the distinction between the rational part and the non-rational part of the soul: while intellectual virtues are excellences of the rational part, virtues of character are excellences of the non-rational part. The rational part can be taught the intellectual virtues, but the non-rational part has to undergo a specific training (habituation or *ethismos*) before we can engage in the kind of learning required to perfect its virtues.⁹⁶ This training involves learning to associate pleasure and pain "with the things that we ought".⁹⁷

Since practical goals are grasped under the guise of the fine, however, moral habituation cannot simply be associative and pleasure oriented. It must also train us to perceptually recognise fine actions and characters. If the perceptual range of the moral student is expanded to include the recognition of fine things, she will be able to have her perceptual attention directed to them. Thus, she will be more readily persuaded to live a virtuous life, and she will be more easily distracted away from false evaluative appearances which give rise to vicious desires.⁹⁸ Hence, moral

⁹⁴NE 1179b15 ff.

⁹⁵NE 1103a4 ff.

⁹⁶NE 1103a14ff.

⁹⁷NE 1104b12 ff.

⁹⁸See chapter 2.3 on the idea that having an expanded perceptual range renders the non-rational part more amenable to persuasion from the rational part.

habituation involves building the correct pleasurable and painful associations. However, it is also engages us in a less passive, more critical way. It teaches us to recognise fine things perceptually. This kind of training of the human non-rational part is not shared by non-human animals, who are not able to perceptually recognise fine things. However, since it does not rely on arguments and rational persuasion, it is importantly different from the kind of teaching that addresses first and foremost our rational part. Moral habituation and its musical counterpart are designed to address the peculiarly developed perceptual range of human non-rational cognition, and their ultimate goal is to improve the harmony between parts of the soul in the human soul.

Chapter 6

Practical Excellences and Practical Failures

6.1 Introduction

Intellectual virtues are rational excellences, they include wisdom (*sophia*), science (*epistēmē*), comprehension (*sunesis*), practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). Examples of non-rational excellences (virtues of character) are generosity (*eleutheriotēs*) and temperance (*sōphrosunē*).¹ In this chapter, I look at an intellectual virtue which is of distinctive ethical importance: *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom. My study of the peculiarly human theory of cognition at the basis of Aristotle's ethics guides my reconstruction of his views on *phronēsis*. I look at *phronēsis* as a peculiarly human practical excellence. Divinities are not strictly speaking practically wise because they do not engage in actions other than contemplation. Non-human animals are sometimes called "*phronimoi*" in the ethical works and in the biological works.² However, human practical wisdom is distinctive, it is rational virtue, it generates peculiarly human rational desires and it governs human actions, which alongside human character states are the appropriate objects of moral evaluation.³

In the first section, I argue that *phronēsis* is hard to achieve: it requires correct actions and correct (rational and non-rational) desires. I suggest that correct actions and rational desires are not mere external conditions for one's possession of *phronēsis*, but they are generated by it.

¹*NE* 1103a4–5, *NE* 1139a1–5 and *EE* 1220a4–12. Most interpreters agree that virtues of character are virtues of the non-rational part, an exception is Lorenz 2009.

²*NE* 1141a26–28, *HA* 611a16, *HA* 612a3, *HA* 612b1, *PA* 648a6, *GA* 753a11–12. On animal *phronēsis*, see Labarrière 1990.

³*NE* 1139a19–20, *NE* 1149b31–1150a5.

In the second section, I argue that *phronēsis* generates correct non-rational desires too because it is a distinctive kind of rational excellence. *Phronēsis* is both a persuasive and also a discriminative rational excellence.

In conclusion, I argue that in light of this account of *phronēsis* we may see that the enkratic and the akratic are victim of a similar rational failure. They both lack *phronēsis* because the rational part of their soul, when engaged with practical matters, fails to be persuasive and to direct their non-rational desires. I argue that Aristotle thinks that akratics can be correctly described as ignorant because their rational part fails to grasp arguments suitable to persuade their non-rational part. However, they are not necessarily unaware that they are acting badly at the moment of action. Hence, akratic ignorance is compatible with the possibility of this particular kind of clear-eyed *akrasia*.⁴

6.2 Having *Phronēsis*

Aristotle distinguishes between practical and theoretical cognition.⁵ Theoretical cognition aims at the truth, and practical cognition at action. This distinction is applied to rational cognition in particular at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics VI*, where the rational part of the soul is subdivided into two sub-parts: the scientific part and the calculating or deliberative part.⁶ The scientific part is concerned with truth, and the calculating or deliberative part is concerned with truth as well as action and production:⁷ the scientific part engages in theoretical thinking, and the calculative and deliberative part in productive and practical thinking.

This distinction between practical and theoretical thought has a fundamental role to play in the discussion of *phronēsis*. *Phronēsis* is an intellectual virtue,⁸ and its aim is action.⁹ It is defined as

⁴Since, on my view, Aristotle thinks that akratics fail to grasp the correct reasons why their actions are bad, he does not allow for all types of clear-eyed *akrasia*. In particular, he denies that having the correct phronetic grasp of why an action is vicious is compatible with performing it. I thank Giles Pearson for pointing out that there are different types of clear-eyed *akrasia*.

⁵See chapter 3.2.

⁶Respectively, *to epistēmōnikon* and *to logistikōn/bouleutikon* (*NE* 1139a1 ff.).

⁷Aristotle suggests that the calculating and deliberative part is concerned with what can be otherwise in *NE* 1139b1–5, *NE* 1139a1–18, and he argues that what can be otherwise includes action and production in *NE* 1140a1–2.

⁸*Contra* McDowell 1998b, p. 40 ff. who thinks that *phronēsis* is not strictly speaking a virtue of the rational part, but by definition a virtue of both the rational and non-rational part. His view is difficult to square with the partition of the soul into a rational and non-rational part as it is stated in book I and VI. See Coope 2012, p. 144 for this objection.

⁹The contrast is with craft knowledge (*technē*), which is concerned with productions (*poiēseis*) and not actions (*praxeis*), the distinction between the two having to do with the fact that goal of

A practical state with *logos* grasping the truth about things that are good or bad for a human being.¹⁰

Phronēsis is an excellent state of our thinking and deliberative part, it grasps the truth about what is good or bad for beings like us. It is also practical (*praktikē*) or concerned with action because action is its aim: those who are *phronimoi* characteristically act well, and one does not count a having *phronēsis* if one fails to act on it.¹¹ Having *phronēsis*, however, does not merely require acting well. Just *having* bad desires, or desires to act badly, without acting on them is enough to prevent us from being *phronimoi*.¹²

Aristotle's account of what it takes to have *phronēsis* shows that this rational excellence is difficult to attain, and raises a question about it. The question is whether acting well and having good desires are merely external necessary conditions for *phronēsis*, or whether *phronēsis* itself, as a rational excellence, generates good actions and prevents bad desires from arising. We might think that performing bad actions and having bad desires prevents us from being *phronimoi* just as being dead would prevent us from being *phronimoi*. Both being alive and acting or desiring well are external necessary conditions that enable us to have *phronēsis*. But we might also think that having *phronēsis* generates good actions and good desires. In the latter case, *phronēsis* would not merely require good conduct and correct desires.¹³

action is internal, and the goal of production external. On the relationship between *phronēsis* and craft knowledge see further *NE* 1140a1 ff. and Broadie 1991, pp. 202 and ff. for a summary and discussion.

¹⁰ἔστιν ἀληθὴ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά. *NE* 1140b4–6.

¹¹Hence, for example, *phronēsis*' concern with particulars. See *NE* 1141b15–25, *NE* 1152a8–9 and *NE* 1178a9 ff., where *phronēsis* is said to require external goods precisely because actions require external goods, and one can't be *phronimos* without acting.

¹²*NE* 1144b30–1145a6. See however Telfer 1989 and Callard 2014 for the view that enkratics (i.e. those who have bad desires but do not act on them) can be *phronimoi*. Callard points to the fact that Aristotle describes *enkrateia* as a good (*spoudaia*) state that makes the reasoning correct (*orthos logos*) in order to show that continents can have *phronēsis* (see respectively *NE* 1145b8 and *EE* 1127b12–20. The latter piece of evidence seems to me particularly problematic, because at *EE* 1127b12–20 Aristotle seems to be discussing the *endoxa* without yet stating his own view). Telfer 1989, pp. 38–40 suggests that the enkratic has the same degree of practical knowledge as the virtuous, even if Aristotle is reluctant to admit it. However, *contra* Callard and Telfer, Aristotle's account of the unity of the virtues in *NE VI*. 13 implies that if the enkratic had *phronēsis*, then she'd be fully virtuous, or *agathos haplōs*. But if the enkratic were fully virtuous, she would not have bad desires (*NE* 1145a1–2, and Coope 2012, p. 147).

¹³Elizabeth Telfer sees a similar problem arising for the relationship between *phronēsis* and virtuous action:

It is not clear whether Aristotle is simply claiming that we do not count someone as wise unless her conduct is good, or whether he is saying that practical wisdom involves a kind of knowledge which (unlike that possessed by the weak man, for example) generates appropriate action. (Telfer 1989, p. 38).

In order to answer this question, both in the case of bad desires and in the case of bad conduct, we must trace the distinction between the requirements for one's possession of *phronēsis* and the effects of one's possession of *phronēsis*.

The case of action, it seems to me, is more straightforward. Aristotle defines *phronēsis* as practical (*praktikē*), and argues that its goal is action, or more precisely acting well.¹⁴ He does not simply say that good conduct is required in order to have *phronēsis*. His point is rather that *phronēsis* issues into good conduct. The question, then, is not *whether*, but *how* it is able to generate good conduct and prevent bad conduct. Even though *phronēsis* can be the source of good actions because it grasps what is truly good and bad for beings like us, merely grasping evaluative truths is not always enough to prevent bad actions. Merely grasping evaluative truths cannot prevent all bad actions because sometimes we knowingly act on desire causing false evaluative appearances.¹⁵

Assessing whether the absence of desires to act viciously is necessary for acquiring *phronēsis* or it is an effect of one's possession of *phronēsis* is more difficult. For Aristotle, the good state of practical thought is specifically truth in agreement with correct desire:

Thought concerned with study, not with action or production, has its good or bad state in being true or false, for this is the function of whatever thinks. But the good state of what thinks about action is truth agreeing with correct desire.¹⁶

The good state of practical thought (i.e., *phronēsis*) corresponds to true *logos* in agreement with correct desire. *Phronēsis* is surely concerned with correct rational desires, i.e. decisions (*prohairesis*) and wishes (*boulēseis*). Decision is a “deliberative desire” (*bouleutikē orexis*) to do an action which is up to us, and it is the result of the combination of the desire for the end (*boulēsis*) and deliberation about what is “toward the end”.¹⁷ *Phronēsis*, then, generates correct decisions in so far as it is an excellence of the deliberative part of our soul. Similarly, it is easy to see that *phronēsis*

¹⁴NE 1139a22–31, NE 1140b4–6, EE 1221b29.

¹⁵See chapter 3.4.

¹⁶τῆς δὲ θεωρητικῆς διανοίας καὶ μὴ πρακτικῆς μηδὲ ποιητικῆς τὸ εὖ καὶ κακῶς τάληθές ἐστι καὶ ψεῦδος (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ παντὸς διανοητικοῦ ἔργου)· τοῦ δὲ πρακτικοῦ καὶ διανοητικοῦ ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ. NE 1139a29–31. I follow Olfert 2014, p. 208 fn. 6 and Broadie and Rowe 2002 in taking τὸ εὖ to be the implicit subject at NE 1139a30 and in assuming that Aristotle here is stating two necessary conditions for practical wisdom.

¹⁷NE 1113a10 ff.

generates correct wishes (*boulēseis*).¹⁸ Wishes are rational desires for the goal, they are indispensable for correct decisions and they are necessarily based on rational evaluative cognitions.¹⁹ Since *phronēsis* is a rational state that grasps the truth about what is good and bad for us, it is the source of correct rational wishes.²⁰

It is not as obvious, however, that *phronēsis* generates correct non-rational desires. Involuntary unendorsed evaluative appearances can generate vicious non-rational desires. Just having true rational grasp of what is good and bad for us is insufficient to remove these desires.²¹ In fact, it is not even clear why *phronēsis* needs correct non-rational desires.²² To show that *phronēsis* needs correct non-rational desires, Aristotle cannot rely on the fact that *phronēsis* is practical. This is clear from his account of *enkrateia*: enkratics have vicious non-rational desires, but they refrain from acting on them. It is not just that enkratic people can sometimes refrain from acting badly. Rather, they are in a state such that they resist their bad desires. They are, Aristotle writes, *the sort of people* who don't pursue pleasures against reason.²³

Similarly, the fact that *phronēsis* requires the right kind of pleasures does not explain why it needs correct non-rational desires. The practically wise person enjoys fine actions because they are fine.²⁴ Bad non-rational desires, i.e. desires to act viciously, wouldn't necessarily prevent her from enjoying fine actions appropriately. It is plausible to think that the pleasure in acting well would push away the pain caused by the frustrated desire. After all, according to Aristotle, if we can get ourselves to take intense pleasure in something, this will distract us from other activities. Conversely, if we don't take enough pleasure in our current activities, we will engage in others at the same time, like people who eat sweets at the theatre when they are not enjoying the play very much.²⁵

¹⁸NE 1113a10–15, NE 1142b15–20.

¹⁹NE 1113a10–15 and NE 1142b15–20. See chapter 1.4 on wishes.

²⁰NE 1142b31–33.

²¹See chapter 4.4.

²²See Coope 2012 for this problem and its discussion.

²³See Coope 2012, p. 151, NE 1151a27–8 and NE 1151b34–1152a1–4 on the stability of the enkratic's condition.

²⁴NE 1170a8–11.

²⁵NE 1175b8–15, see chapter 2.3. The enkratic can be seen as failing to rationally enjoy acting well in the way the *phronimos* does, and this can be regarded as a rational failure of a kind. For example, it can be seen as a failure to rationally grasp that the action is fine, and why it is fine. See Coope 2012, pp. 153 for this thesis, EE 1224a33–6, EE 1224b16–19, and NE 1152a1 ff. As Coope notes in the conclusions, this rational failure of the enkratic is not enough to explain why bad desires prevent one from being *phronimos*, though it does show why enkratics are not *phronimoi*. The fact that enkratics fail to take rational pleasure in acting finely and have bad non-rational desires is not sufficient to show that having bad desires necessarily prevents us from taking the right kind of pleasure in acting well. Aristotle might just be reluctant to call people who take the right kind of

Phronēsis does not require correct non-rational desires even if it requires correct beliefs about our goals. At *NE* 1144a32–37, Aristotle argues that the correct principles and goals are only apparent to the practically wise person. However, it is difficult to reconstruct exactly what grasp of the goals is peculiar to the practically wise and it seems clear that this kind of grasp cannot be equivalent to a correct belief of judgement about the goal. At least having and preserving correct beliefs about our practical goals is compatible with having some bad non-rational desires.²⁶ Aristotle, like Plato, believes that the importance of non-rational habituation to take pleasure and pain in the right things cannot be stressed enough, and that it leads to the acquisition of the correct beliefs about our goals.²⁷ Further, he thinks that virtue and correct desires preserve the correct intellectual presuppositions about our goals, while vices destroy them and pervert them.²⁸ However, he also thinks that akratics, despite their bad desires, preserve the correct beliefs about the principle or the goal.²⁹ In addition, he believes that people who only have natural virtue and lack full virtue might have both the correct beliefs about the goal and bad desires.³⁰ This implies that he wouldn't deny some grasp of the correct goal to enkratics either, and that he believes it possible for those with bad non-rational desires to recognise the correct goal.³¹

In conclusion, non-rational desires to act viciously do not necessarily make a difference for deliberation. This is because these non-rational desires needn't be considered by a rational deliberator if she takes their cognitive basis to be false.³² Consider a rational deliberator who has a non-rational desire for a cake that seems pleasure in acting well and have bad desires "enkratic", without implying that being in their condition is impossible.

²⁶ *Contra*, e.g., Aquinas, *ST*, 1 2ae, q 65, a1.

²⁷ *NE* 1151a15–19 and *NE II*. 3–4. Cf. *Rep.* 402a, *Rep.* 518e, *Laws* 653a–c.

²⁸ *NE* 1140b13 ff. and *NE* 1144a29 ff.

²⁹ *NE* 1151a15–19.

³⁰ *NE* 1151a15–20 and *NE* 1144b32 ff.

³¹ Sorabji 1980, p. 213 argues that Aristotle's view can't be that full virtue teaches the right goal, for full virtue can't be acquired without *phronēsis*. Moss 2012, ch. 7, 8 and esp. 7.5 attributes a limited role to thought in the acquisition of the goal, arguing that its function is merely to grasp the correct goal "as a goal". Other interpreters believe that the role of thought is more substantive: it grasps the goal as a goal, and it also gives it content. It determines what the agent has as her guiding goal in deliberation. See for example Cooper 1975, p. 64, Irwin 1975 and Greenwood 1909, p. 51. See also Lorenz 2009 for the related thesis that the intellect is required for full character virtue. Whichever interpretation one favours is compatible with the suggestion that having some non-rational bad desires does not necessarily prevent one from acquiring and preserving the right goals.

³² See Irwin 1988b, p 88 and Irwin 2007, Section 8.104 for the view that people who have deviant desires are prevented from deliberating correctly and see Coope 2012 for this objection. The rational deliberator might be required to take desires to act viciously into account in her deliberation if she foresees that these desires will compel her to act badly in certain circumstances. Presumably, however, not all vicious desires will be compelling in this way.

good and is aware that the cake is in fact not good. She is not compelled to take into account this desire in deliberating about what groceries to buy, for she is aware that it is based on a false appearance. In this respect, she is not much different from an astronomer who is able not to take into account her visual experience in measuring the size of the sun. Having bad non-rational desires does not necessarily disqualify one from having *phronēsis* as a deliberative excellence.

6.3 *Phronēsis* as a Persuasive Rational Excellence

Non-rational desires to act viciously don't necessarily interfere with our goals, with the pleasure we take in acting well, with our deliberations and with our actions. On reflection, then, it is difficult to show that one cannot be *phronimos* if one has vicious desires of this sort. Perhaps, Aristotle adopted this view just as a matter of convention. By looking at *phronēsis* in light of Aristotle's theory of cognition, we can however avoid this conclusion. *Phronēsis* is both a practical excellence and also a persuasive and prescriptive (*epitaktikē*) rational excellence. One of its tasks is to give commands to the non-rational part of the soul, and its commands are effective against false non-rational appearances that cause vicious non-rational desires.

To analyse *phronēsis*' prescriptive nature, let us take a step back and look at the interaction between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul. In the *Politics*, the body, the non-rational part of the soul and the rational part are hierarchically arranged:

It is clear that it is natural and advantageous for the soul to rule the body and for thought (i.e. the rational part) to rule the part that has emotions ...³³

Here, the best possible condition of body and soul is described as involving the soul ruling the body, and the thinking part ruling the non-rational emotional and desiderative part. A well functioning and excellently disposed rational part will, among other things, rule and govern the non-rational part.³⁴

Elsewhere, the ruling excellence of the rational part is described both as persuading the non-rational part out of its bad desires and also as governing action:

³³φανερὸν ἔστιν ὅτι κατὰ φύσιν καὶ συμφέρον τὸ ἄρχεσθαι τῷ σώματι ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ τῷ παθητικῷ μορίῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τοῦ μορίου τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος ... *Pol.* 1254b5–10. In what follows, Aristotle uses the internal structure of the soul as an analogy to argue that is natural for men to rule over women and slaves. Obviously he is mistaken to take the hierarchical arrangement of the soul as a model for the hierarchical arrangement of society.

³⁴In *Pol.* 1260a5 ff. this idea is spelled out further.

But since the intellectual virtues are with *logos*, they belong to that rational part of the soul which gives commands (*epitaktikon esti*) to the soul in virtue of being rational, while the ethical virtues belong to the non-rational part, which by its nature listens to the rational part.³⁵

An excellent rational part gives commands, and an excellent non-rational part listens to these commands. The commands are meant to orient the non-rational part toward correct desires as well as virtuous actions. At *NE* 1102b28 we learn that the non-rational part listens better to the commands of the non-rational part in virtuous people than enkratic people. The virtuous person's non-rational part speaks with the same voice (*homophōnein*) as the rational part and it is better able to listen to it (*euēkoōteron*) than the non-rational part of an enkratic soul. The difference between virtuous people and enkratics is that the latter have bad non-rational desires. Hence, the non-rational part of a virtuous soul must be better able to listen to reason because reason successfully encourages to form correct desires. This suggests that the commands of an excellent rational part prescribe correct desires as well as virtuous actions.³⁶

Having established that one of the virtues of the rational part is commanding or prescriptive, we can go back to the *Nicomachean Ethics VI* to reconstruct which intellectual virtue this is. Since this commanding virtue concerns action and desire, it is natural to think that it corresponds to *phronēsis*. In addition, the commanding nature of *phronēsis* is brought out by the comparison with comprehension (*sunesis*). Comprehension is about the same things, or about the same subject matter as *phronēsis*: it grasps what is good or bad for beings like us.³⁷ There is however an important difference between them. While comprehension is simply discriminative (*kritikē*), *phronēsis* is prescriptive (*epitaktikē*):

For *phronēsis* is prescriptive, since its end is what action we must or must not do, whereas comprehension only judges. (For comprehension and good comprehension are the same, and so are people with comprehension and good comprehension). Comprehension is neither having *phronēsis* nor acquiring it. Rather, it is similar to the way learning is called comprehending

³⁵ἐπεὶ δ' αἱ διανοητικαὶ μετὰ λόγου, αἱ μὲν τοιαῦται τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος, ὃ ἐπιτακτικόν ἐστι τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ λόγον ἔχει, αἱ δ' ἠθικαὶ τοῦ ἀλόγου μὲν, ἀκολουθητικοῦ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν τῷ λόγον ἔχοντι. *EE* 1220a8-11. See also *EE* 1220b5-6. The idea that the rational part should rule over the non-rational part has an obvious Platonic precedent in *Rep.* 442c, where Plato argues that just people are such only if their rational part has knowledge and rules over the other parts (on this point see Coope 2012, fn. 38).

³⁶See also chapter 2.3.

³⁷*NE* 1143a7ff., *NE* 1140b5 ff.

when someone applies scientific knowledge. In the same way comprehension consists in the application of belief to judge someone else's remarks on a question that concerns *phronēsis*, and moreover it must judge them finely since judging well is the same as judging finely.³⁸

Comprehension only judges, and it judges well, other people's remarks on questions within the domain of enquiry of *phronēsis*. However, having comprehension is not the same as having or even as acquiring *phronēsis*, because *phronēsis* is prescriptive and ruling.³⁹ Hence, *phronēsis* is the prescriptive and ruling virtue of the rational part, and its commands are meant to govern non-rational desires as well as actions.⁴⁰

Since it is a prescriptive excellence, and its commands are directed to non-rational desires as well as action, *phronēsis* must be a characteristically persuasive state. That is, it must be a state in which the rational part of the soul is best capable of making itself heard by the non-rational part. Naturally, the rational part will require a non-rational part which pays heed to its commands for its persuasive excellence to achieve its aims. But this doesn't imply that the rational part's ability to persuade can't be cultivated and perfected independently of the non-rational part's ability to listen.⁴¹

In chapter 2.3, I argued that the non-rational part can communicate with the rational one in virtue of its peculiarly human characteristics. I also argued that the communication between parts of the soul is improved if our attention is appropriately narrowed, and that one effective way to narrow our attention is by sustaining it with pleasure. This suggests that one way in which *phronēsis* could be especially

³⁸ἡ μὲν γὰρ φρόνησις ἐπιτακτικὴ ἐστίν· τί γὰρ δεῖ πράττειν ἢ μὴ, τὸ τέλος αὐτῆς ἐστίν· ἡ δὲ σύνεσις κριτικὴ μόνον. ταῦτό γὰρ σύνεσις καὶ εὐσυνεσία καὶ συνετοὶ καὶ εὐσύνετοι. ἔστι δ' οὔτε τὸ ἔχειν τὴν φρόνησιν οὔτε τὸ λαμβάνειν ἢ σύνεσις· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τὸ μανθάνειν λέγεται συνιέναι, ὅταν χρῆται τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ, οὕτως ἐν τῷ ἐν τῷ χρῆσθαι τῇ δόξῃ ἐπὶ τὸ κρίνειν περὶ τούτων περὶ ὧν ἡ φρόνησις ἐστίν, ἄλλου λέγοντος, καὶ κρίνειν καλῶς· τὸ γὰρ εὖ τῷ καλῶς τὸ αὐτό. *NE* 1143a9–16.

³⁹*NE* 1181a18 ff. also suggests that comprehension, unlike *phronēsis*, does not grasp fully blown explanations but merely forms beliefs or judgements on the basis of experience. Given the scarcity of textual evidence on comprehension, however, it is difficult to prove that comprehension does not grasp explanations.

⁴⁰At *Stat.* 260b3–5, Plato introduces a similar distinction between discriminative and prescriptive cognition:

So if we divided off two parts of theoretical knowledge as a whole, referring to one as prescriptive and the other as making judgements, would we say that it had been divided suitably?

ΞΕ. Ἄρ' οὖν συμπάσης τῆς γνωστικῆς εἰ τὸ μὲν ἐπιτακτικὸν μέρος, τὸ δὲ κριτικὸν διαιρούμενοι προσείπομεν, ἐμμελῶς ἂν φαίμεν διηροῦσθαι. *Stat.* 260b3–5.

On the antecedents of *phronēsis* in the *Statesman* see Natali 1989, ch. 1. See also Gadamer 1998, in the postscriptum, who draws further parallels between Aristotle's *phronēsis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics VI* and Plato's *epistēmē praktikē* at *Stat.* 258d–259c and *Stat.* 283c–287b.

⁴¹See further Coope 2012, fn. 35 and Gottlieb 1994, p. 284 and ff.

persuasive is by being suitably accompanied by rational pleasures.⁴² *Phronēsis* involves understanding or grasping rationally which actions are fine and why.⁴³ Aristotle took this kind of grasp to be necessarily accompanied by pleasure.⁴⁴ Hence, the pleasure involved in one’s phronetic grasp of the fine might be suitable to persuade the non-rational part: it might distract it from bad desires, and it might also focus its attention on what is truly fine.⁴⁵

An account in which the rational pleasures of *phronēsis* persuade the non-rational part, however, needs to explain in what way these pleasures appeal to the non-rational part.⁴⁶ If *phronēsis*’ understanding of which actions are fine and why they are fine is in no way accessible to the non-rational part, it won’t appeal to it even if it is accompanied by rational pleasures. The non-rational part would simply be blind and unresponsive to this kind of pleasures. This consideration lead us to the second way in which *phronēsis* might be especially suitable to correct non-rational desires. We find a preliminary hint of this second aspect of *phronēsis*’ persuasiveness in the *Politics*. This hint unfortunately emerges from Aristotle’s repellent account of natural slavery, and from the related views on the correct interaction between masters and slaves. While it is clearly mistaken to take it as a suitable account of an appropriate relationship between human beings, it can be used as an instructive analogy for the interaction between parts of the soul:

It is manifest, then, that the master ought to be the source of such excellence in the slave, and not a mere possessor of the art of mastership who trains the slave in his functions. That is why they are mistaken who forbid conversation (*logou*) with slaves and say that we should employ command only, for slaves stand even more in need of admonition than children.⁴⁷

⁴²See Coope 2012, pp. 154 ff. for a fuller defence of this view.

⁴³This follows from its definition at *NE* 1140b4–6, as well as from the idea that aiming at the fine involves hitting the mean as reason or a correct rational account (*logos*) prescribes (*NE* 1119b16–17). See Moss 2014 for the thesis that *logos* means rational account in this context.

⁴⁴As suggested by the idea that pleasure completes rational activities *NE IX*.

⁴⁵For an account similar in spirit but different in the letter about how *phronēsis* is a special kind of rational excellence see Charles 2015. In Charles’ “Third Way”, *phronēsis*’ grasp of the fine is intrinsically desiderative, and therefore incompatible with vicious desires (see however chapter 4.3 *contra* the thesis that rational grasp of evaluative features is intrinsically desiderative).

⁴⁶I thank Giles Pearson for raising this issue.

⁴⁷φανερὸν τοίνυν ὅτι τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρετῆς αἴτιον εἶναι δεῖ τῷ δούλῳ τὸν δεσπότην, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὸν τὴν διδασκαλικὴν ἔχοντα τῶν ἔργων [δεσποτικὴν]. διὸ λέγουσιν οὐ καλῶς οἱ λόγου τοὺς δούλους ἀποστεροῦντες καὶ φάσκοντες ἐπιτάξει χρῆσθαι μόνον· νουθητετέον γὰρ μᾶλλον τοὺς δούλους ἢ τοὺς παῖδας. *Pol.* 1260b2–7. Aristotle’s target here is Plato’s thesis (*Laws* 777e1 ff.) that one shouldn’t be familiar and converse with one’s slaves. See Susemihl and Hicks 1895 and Aubonnet 1960 ad loc.

For Aristotle, masters are supposed to instil virtue in their slaves. They do so by giving their slaves admonitions, as opposed to mere orders, just as one does with children (or even more than one does with children). These admonitions require something more than mere orders (*epitaxeis*), they require an account, an explanation, or generally some more elaborate conversational engagement (*logos*). The reference to admonitions (*nouthetēseis*) is clearly reminiscent of the description of the interaction between the rational part and the non-rational part in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as is the analogy between parents and children or masters and slaves. Here, just as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, admonitions come from something rational (the rational part, the master or the parent) and are addressed to something non-rational (the slave, the child or the non-rational part).⁴⁸

This passage is of special interest because it associates admonitions with some kind of *logos*: it suggests that if one is to give effective admonitions to children and slaves, one should address them with some kind of rational conversation. Presumably, the conversation will include an explanation, or an account, of the orders given. If this interaction is parallel to the interaction between the rational and non-rational part of the soul, then it suggests that the rational part of the soul can render its admonitions more persuasive by combining them with some *logoi*. Precisely these *logoi* could be what *phronēsis* generates as a persuasive rational excellence.

Reconstructing the nature of the *logoi* that make *phronēsis*' admonitions and exhortations especially persuasive is a difficult task: although Aristotle associates *phronēsis* with correct *logos* or true *logos* in many occasions, he rarely discusses or spells out the content of the *logos*.⁴⁹ The rare occasions in which he does include his discussion of deliberation and decision. True *logos* and correct desire make the decision excellent (*prohairesis spoudaia*).⁵⁰ Since decision is a *deliberative* desire,

⁴⁸See *Pol.* 1260a12-14, *Pol.* 1252a30, on how natural slaves lack the deliberative and rational part of the soul. William Fortenbaugh (see Fortenbaugh 2006b, Fortenbaugh 2006a and Fortenbaugh 1975, p. 53 ff.) takes the fact that slaves are responsive to admonition to mean that they do not lack thought, and to suggest that the rational part is not the same as the thinking part in *De Anima*. This view is however in tension with the identification of the rational part with thought (*nous*) at *Pol.* 1254b5-10. Given the cognitive sophistication of the peculiarly human non-rational part (see chapter 2.2), the assumption that natural slaves to have a share in thought is not required to explain why they can follow admonitions.

⁴⁹*NE* 1139a22-31, *NE* 1140b20-21, *NE* 1144b23-26. My discussion of these issues in what follows is indebted to Moss 2014 and Allen 2015. Whether the meaning of *logos* is the same in all these passages is widely debated. See Cook Wilson 1913, see Gauthier and Jolif 1970, pp. 147 ff. for a summary of the debate at the beginning of the XX century, and see Moss 2014 for a more recent proposal. I don't attempt to suggest a translation for *logos* that would work for all these passages in what follows, as I am only interested in the commanding and persuasive *logoi* of *phronēsis*.

⁵⁰*NE* 1139a22-31.

and deliberation is a kind of reasoning or of calculating,⁵¹ the true *logos* must be a product of good deliberation. But what kind of product is it exactly? Since it is called “true”, *logos* must be something to which truth and falsity apply, like a statement, a proposition, or a belief.⁵² The true *logos* connected with deliberation does not correspond to just any true statement:

However, we can reach a good by a false syllogism, as well as [sc. by a true one], so that we reach the right thing to do, but by the wrong steps, when the middle term is false. Hence this type of deliberation, leading us by the wrong steps to the right thing to do, is not enough for good deliberation either.⁵³

Further, there might be error in deliberation about either the universal or the particular. For [sc. we may wrongly suppose] either that all heavy waters are bad, or that this water is heavy.⁵⁴

In these passages, we discover how truth and falsity relate to deliberation and decision, and how one can go wrong in one’s deliberation. The suggestion is that what can be characterized as true or false in deliberation is a syllogism,⁵⁵ and the syllogism can be false because it has a false middle term, a false major premiss or a false minor premiss. Hence, we have an initial reason to believe that the true *logos* that matters for good deliberation and decision will correspond to a “true syllogism”.⁵⁶

Phronēsis’ especially persuasive *logoi* are therefore true deliberative or, as they are often called, “practical” syllogisms.⁵⁷ Practical syllogisms involve: a major premiss stating what kind of things are good for beings of a certain kind; a minor premiss

⁵¹NE 1139a13 ff.

⁵²Hence, at least in this context, Aristotle is not using the term *logos* to indicate the reasoning capacity.

⁵³ἀλλ’ ἔστι καὶ τούτου ψευδεῖ συλλογισμῶ τυχεῖν, καὶ ὁ μὲν δεῖ ποιῆσαι τυχεῖν, δι’ οὗ δ’ οὐ, ἀλλὰ ψευδῆ τὸν μέσον ὄρον εἶναι· ὥστ’ οὐδ’ αὐτῆ πω εὐβουλία, καθ’ ἣν οὐ δεῖ μὲν τυγχάνει, οὐ μέντοι δι’ οὗ ἔδει. NE 1142b23–27.

⁵⁴ἔτι ἡ ἀμαρτία ἢ περὶ τὸ καθόλου ἐν τῷ βουλευέσασθαι ἢ περὶ τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον· ἢ γὰρ ὅτι πάντα τὰ βαρύσταθμα ὕδατα φαύλα, ἢ ὅτι τοδὶ βαρύσταθμον. NE 1142a22–24.

⁵⁵Here and in what follows, I will use the locution “true syllogism” to indicate a syllogism whose premisses are true and explanatory. Although “true syllogism” is an outlandish expression, it seems to me to be the most appropriate to capture the kind of *logoi* that Aristotle has in mind here. This is because it is not clear whether practical syllogisms can legitimately be called “valid” or “sound”.

⁵⁶*Contra*, e.g., Cooper 1975. See Price 2011, p. 219 and Moss 2014, p. 211 for arguments against Cooper’s view, and see further NE 1144a31 and Mem. 453a13 for the view that deliberation involves syllogisms. Even if deliberation involves syllogisms, a study of deliberation need not consider deliberative syllogisms only. See Segvic 2011, pp. 165 ff.

⁵⁷Aristotle never calls them this way, but uses at least once the very close label “syllogisms of things to be done” (NE 1144a31, *syllogismoi tōn praktōn*).

stating that I am a being of that kind, and this is a thing of that kind; a conclusion stating that I should pursue this thing.⁵⁸ Leaving aside, for simplicity, the reference to beings of a certain kind both in the minor and the major, we can give a tentative example of deliberative syllogisms as follows:

PS: Since (i) Preserving the environment is good, and (ii) putting this paper waste in the recycling bin preserves the environment, (c) I should put this paper waste in the recycling bin.

Admittedly, this reconstruction leaves out many thorny issues that Aristotle's practical syllogistic raises.⁵⁹ However, it does I think suggest at least two ways in which Aristotle might have thought *phronēsis*' true *logoi* especially suitable to persuade the non-rational part.

The first reason why a true practical syllogism is especially persuasive is that it makes references to particulars (or "thises") in the minor premiss and in the conclusion.⁶⁰ By engaging in the kind of deliberative reasoning that involves practical syllogisms, we focus our cognitive attention on certain evaluative and non-evaluative features as properties of particulars. We grasp this instance of recycling as environment-preserving, and as good, for example. This particularised cognition is one that can capture the non-rational part's attention, for it does not go beyond its cognitive range. It directs the agent's attention toward the correct evaluative properties of particulars. Thus, it can distract it away from false evaluative appearances that might cause desires to act viciously, especially if it is accompanied by *phronēsis*' characteristic rational pleasure.⁶¹

True practical syllogisms, however, are not persuasive for the non-rational part solely in virtue of involving a rational grasp of evaluative truths about particular "thises". True practical syllogisms can be especially persuasive because they also require

⁵⁸DA 434a16 ff., NE 1147a25 ff., MA 701a7 ff.

⁵⁹Including whether or not the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action; how the practical syllogism stated in terms of universal premisses and particulars can account for sophisticated forms of means end deliberation as hinted at in NE 1144a31 ff. and NE 1112b15; how the premisses necessitate the conclusion. The literature on these matters is vast, a representative but by no means exhaustive list includes: Wiggins 1975, Nussbaum 1978, essay 4, pp. 165 ff. Anscombe 1981, Charles 1984, especially appendix 3, Gottlieb 2006.

⁶⁰DA 434a16 ff. and NE 1147a25 ff., NE 1147a33, MA 701a7 ff. Even if the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an action, it must be accompanied by some cognitive awareness that the particular thing that one is doing is useful, pleasant or good or in general choice-worthy.

⁶¹My account here and in what follows is close to John McDowell's in McDowell 1998c, section 3 and McDowell 1998a, section 5. However, my view differs from his in so far as I think that practical wisdom must *prevent* desire causing false evaluative appearances from arising, as opposed to making them motivationally inert (in McDowell's words, making an appearance motivationally inert amounts to *silencing* it).

a “true” middle term.⁶² Consider the following practical syllogism, which should by Aristotle’s standards count as false:

PSF: Since (i) Pleasing one’s friends is good, and (ii) putting this paper waste in the recycling bin pleases my friends, (c) I should put this paper waste in the recycling bin.

Arguably, the major and minor premiss of this syllogism are true, and so is its conclusion. But this is not enough to make the whole syllogism true. This is because, for Aristotle, a whole syllogism can be made false by a false middle term (*meson horon pseudē*).⁶³ But how can a term, rather than a premiss, be called false, and furthermore make the whole syllogism “false”? As James Allen has argued, looking at syllogisms as explanatory accounts can clarify what Aristotle means when he talks about false middle terms.⁶⁴ Both in practical and theoretical syllogisms, the middle term is the one that gives *the cause*, or the one that explains the reason why the major term belongs to the minor. When the middle does not give the cause, the syllogism might be valid, but it won’t be explanatory. Hence, it won’t be a true explanatory account.⁶⁵

Consider once again PSF. PSF reaches the right conclusion (I should recycle), but doesn’t give the right explanatory reasons. PSF gives a false account of why I should recycle my paper waste: I should recycle because it is good for the environment and not because it pleases my friends. Hence, although all the premisses of PSF are true, and the conclusion is true, PSF is false.

True practical *logoi*, or true practical syllogisms, are therefore true explanatory accounts that give the universal reason (or one of the universal reasons) why a particular thing should be pursued or done.⁶⁶ Why does Aristotle think that these true explanatory accounts are especially suitable to persuade the non-rational part? The answer, I think, lies in the fact that in a true practical syllogism universal

⁶²NE 1142b23–27 above.

⁶³At NE 1142b23–27 the *horon* is not a premiss, but a term, because it is qualified as the middle (*to meson*). Aquinas in his *Sententiae Libri Ethicorum* (VI.VIII: C 1230) is misguided in thinking that what is wrong in practical syllogisms with a false middle term are either the agent’s goals or her means to her goals. If that were the case, the agent’s conclusions would be mistaken too, as it happens in Aquinas’ own example of someone choosing to steal to help the poor. See Gottlieb 2006 for an attempt to solve the problem on Aquinas’ behalf. Her solution is not very persuasive, because the conclusion “I should help the poor” is not, as she claims, true in the given circumstances: if the only available way for us to help the poor is stealing, it is inappropriate, given the circumstances, to help the poor.

⁶⁴See Allen 2015, followed by Moss 2014, section 7. Irwin 1999, p. 248 interprets the passage in the same way.

⁶⁵See for example *APo. I*. 13.

⁶⁶Since the subject of ethics is not codifiable, these reasons may hold only for the most part. See NE 1137b19–24 and McDowell 1998c, pp. 56 ff.

reasons are particularised. Since the middle explanatory term is present in the minor premiss, a true practical syllogism makes universal explanations accessible to the non-rational part: though it cannot grasp that recycling is good because it preserves the environment, the non-rational part can grasp that *this* instance of recycling is good because *it* preserves the environment, and *this* instance of preserving the environment is a good thing.⁶⁷

In addition, a true explanatory account, unlike a false one, will be more likely to prevent the non-rational part from being distracted. True explanatory accounts direct one's perceptual attention to the features of the situation that matter for right action and correct desires. For example, to the fact that recycling here and now preserves the environment here and now. They do not bring in unrelated concerns, such as that the sight of us caring for the environment is pleasing to our friends because it makes them, say, proud of us. Such unrelated concerns might, at times, persuade the non-rational part toward the correct desires. But they are ineffective or misleading at other times: for example when no one can see our environmentalist measures; or worse when it would be easy for us to give the mere appearance that we are avoiding wasteful behaviour, without really avoiding it.

As Aristotle acknowledges, the wrong reasons can sometimes guide the non-rational part toward correct desires and actions. We can get from the false middle to the right conclusions, and do and desire the right things for the wrong reasons. But these cases are *fortunate*, they are not the norm. In fact, cases in which one is so lucky to continue to act correctly despite bad reasoning or absence of reasoning are for Aristotle so rare that they suggest extraordinary explanations: for example, they suggest that we might be lacking in intelligence but be guided by divine inspiration.⁶⁸

One of *phronēsis*' specific tasks is to persuade the non-rational part to form correct desires and prevent the formation of desires to act viciously. *Phronēsis* is especially suited for this task because its commands are accompanied by the right kind of rational pleasures and by the right kind of particularized explanatory accounts. To go back to Aristotle's metaphor in book one of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a rational part which has achieved *phronēsis*' distinctive kind of rational excellence is like a good parent. She gives the appropriate orders and prescriptions, she backs them up with the correct pleasurable incentives and she explains the grounds at the basis of her exhortations

⁶⁷See G. Pearson 2011 for an account of how the non-rational part of the soul has a merely partial grasp of reason's command in akratic's with respect to *thumos*. This account suggests that in non-akratic souls the non-rational part can listen fully to reason's commands.

⁶⁸*EE* 1248a7 ff., *MM* 1199a4–6.

and prescriptions in terms that her children can understand. Hence, *phronēsis* does not merely require, but it produces correct non-rational desires.

In light of this account, we might ask whether a rational part which is capable of taking the right kind of pleasures in fine action and of backing up its commands with the right kind of particularized explanations will be guaranteed to persuade a particularly unresponsive non-rational part. If we are convinced by the thesis that the characteristic pleasures and commands of *phronēsis* are especially suited to persuade the non-rational part, this kind of scenario will certainly be an unlikely one. Yet, it is hard to believe that it would be *impossible* for the non-rational part to be unresponsive to the right kind of explanations and the right kind of rational pleasures. Perhaps, this kind of case is the one Aristotle himself has in mind when he describes people whose non-rational parts are affected by persistent false evaluative appearances that cause vicious desires and pathologically prone to inappropriate fears or desires: people who are terrified of mice and weasels, or people like the tyrant Phalaris who are tempted by cannibalism, or even people who are addicted to nail-biting or hair-plucking.⁶⁹

It is plausible to think that phobia, addiction and diseased desires could be resistant to the most persuasive of explanations or the strongest of rational pleasures. In addition, Aristotle would presumably deny that someone who has the right kind of rational pleasures and grasps the right kind of explanations and yet is affected by pathological desires is *phronimos*. Arguably, even in this rare case, his denial of *phronēsis* to those who have non-rational desires to act viciously would not be a mere matter of convention. Persuading the non-rational part is one of the specific tasks of an excellent rational part, or of a rational part that has *phronēsis*. If the rational part fails to persuade, then it is not excellent, it lacks *phronēsis* as a prescriptive excellence, even if the reason for its failure is the bad condition of the non-rational part.⁷⁰

Hence, Aristotle's view that *phronēsis* requires correct non-rational desires is not a mere matter of convention, but the effect of his understanding of *phronēsis* as a distinctive kind of rational excellence. Since *phronēsis* is prescriptive, practical and persuasive, it generates good conduct, good rational desires and good non-rational desires. A rational part can fail to perform these tasks because it doesn't take the right kind of pleasures, or provide the right kind of explanations, or because it is paired with a morbidly unresponsive non-rational part. Whenever the rational part fails in one of these ways, it cannot be said to possess *phronēsis*.

⁶⁹*NE* 1149a5 ff. and *NE* 1148b25 ff.

⁷⁰Similarly, at *Phys. III*. 3, the teacher does not count as teaching if no pupil is being taught, even if the reason why the pupil is not being taught is because she is not paying attention.

The practical, prescriptive and discriminative sides of *phronēsis* are relatively integrated. *Phronēsis* is especially suitable to prevent false evaluative appearances that generate vicious desires because it generates true particularised explanatory accounts accompanied by the appropriate kind of rational pleasures. Preventing false evaluative appearances that cause vicious desires prevents bad conduct. If you don't mistakenly see bad things as unqualifiedly pleasant or good, you won't be attracted to them, and you will avoid vicious behaviour.

The persuasive and practical sides of *phronēsis* distinguish it from its theoretical counterpart: scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*). Though both grasp true explanatory accounts, only those grasped by *phronēsis* are specifically addressed to the non-rational part and to the prevention of its evaluative mistakes. You can be a good physicist and know the laws of refraction, say, even though you continue to see a straight stick immersed in water as bent. You cannot be *phronimos* and know why, here and now, you should help someone in need if the generous endeavour appears to you unqualifiedly unpleasant or useless. For this reason, *phronēsis* requires an adequately trained non-rational part even though it is not an excellence of character.⁷¹

Arguably, *phronēsis* is distinct from its productive counterpart (*technē*) for similar reasons. While both *phronēsis* and *technē* require experience and are applied and engaged with particulars, only *phronēsis* is persuasive and prevents false evaluative appearances that cause desires to act against its goals.⁷² The possession of a *technē* does not require the prevention of false evaluative appearances that cause desires to act, or even the prevention of evaluative appearances that go against the goal of the *technē*. Having a *technē* requires grasping true rational accounts (*logoi*),⁷³ but these rational accounts do not need to be persuasive against desires to act against the goals of the *technē*. Aristotle suggests that *technē* is not necessarily persuasive when he argues that while it is impossible to possess and misuse *phronēsis*, it is possible to possess and misuse a *technē*: one can have technical knowledge of medicine, say, even if she uses it to kill rather than to cure.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Contra* e.g. McDowell 1998b and McDowell 1989.

⁷² On *phronēsis*, *technē* and experience see *NE* 1142a12-21, *Met.* 980b26–981a12 and *APo.* 100a3-9. Although it is clear that *technē* arises from experience for Aristotle, it is less obvious that it requires it, especially in the *Metaphysics*.

⁷³ *NE* 1140a1–a23.

⁷⁴ *EE* 1246a30–35, *NE* 1140b23–25, *Met.* 1046b5–25. A full analysis of the relationship between *technē* and *phronēsis* would require more than simply focusing on the possibility of misuse. Here I follow Broadie 1991, pp. 78–82 *contra* Richardson Lear 2005, pp. 100 ff. fn. 20.

6.4 *Akrasia* as a Rational Failure

Phronēsis is a peculiar rational excellence because one of its tasks is to address and persuade the non-rational part of the human soul. Aristotle's account of the peculiarly human cognitive make up explains why beings like us can aim at and achieve this kind of rational excellence. Our non-rational part is such that, with some training, it can respond to the rational part's commands and pleasures. Our rational part can make its commands suitable for and appealing to the non-rational part by backing them up with the right kind of pleasures and explanations.

This account of *phronēsis* as a distinctive kind of rational excellence can help us to elucidate Aristotle's account of *akrasia*. In particular, it can help us to explain in what way *akrasia* is a rational failure. Aristotle explains why the akratic cannot be *phronimos* in detail:

It is impossible for the same person to be at the same time wise (*phronimos*) and akratic. For we have shown that a wise person must also at the same time be excellent in character, [sc. and the akratic is not]. Moreover, someone is not wise simply in virtue of knowing, but he must also act on his knowledge. But the akratic person doesn't—but nothing stops the intelligent (*deinon*) person from being akratic, and this is the reason why sometimes akratics seem to have *phronēsis*, for *phronēsis* differs from intelligence in the way we explained in the previous discussion, they are similar in account, but differ with respect to decision—He [sc. the akratic] is not in the condition of one who knows and is attending to his knowledge, but in the condition of one asleep or drunk. He acts voluntarily, for in a way he knows what he does and why, but he is not evil, for his decision is decent.⁷⁵

The reasons for the akratic's lack of *phronēsis* are summarised in four points. First, the akratic is not excellent in character, for she has bad desires, and *phronēsis* generates good rational and non-rational desires. Second, the akratic acts badly. Third, the akratic might be intelligent and might reach a decent (*epieikēs*) decision, but her

⁷⁵Οὐδ' ἅμα φρόνιμον καὶ ἀκρατῆ ἐνδέχεται εἶναι τὸν αὐτόν· ἅμα γὰρ φρόνιμος καὶ σπουδαῖος τὸ ἦθος δέδεικται ὄν. ἔτι οὐ τῷ εἰδέναι μόνον φρόνιμος ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ πρακτικὸς· ὁ δ' ἀκρατῆς οὐ πρακτικὸς—τὸν δὲ δεινὸν οὐδὲν κωλύει ἀκρατῆ εἶναι· διὸ καὶ δοκοῦσιν ἐνίοτε φρόνιμοι μὲν εἶναι τινες ἀκρατεῖς δέ, διὰ τὸ τὴν δεινότητα διαφέρειν τῆς φρονήσεως τὸν εἰρημένον τρόπον ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις λόγοις, καὶ κατὰ μὲν τὸν λόγον ἐγγύς εἶναι, διαφέρειν δὲ κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν—οὐδὲ δὴ ὡς ὁ εἰδὼς καὶ θεωρῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὁ καθεύδων ἢ οἰνωμένος. καὶ ἐκὼν μὲν, τρόπον γὰρ τινα εἰδὼς καὶ ὁ ποιεῖ καὶ οὐ ἔνεκα, πονηρὸς δ' οὐ· ἢ γὰρ προαίρεσις ἐπεικῆς. *NE* 1152a5–17.

decision is not as good as a truly wise decision, and not as bad as a vicious one.⁷⁶ Fourth, the akratic is in some way in an impaired intellectual state: she doesn't attend to her knowledge, it's as if she were asleep or drunk. Yet, she acts voluntarily and knows, in a way, what she is doing and why.

This passage offers a guide to the rational failures of *akrasia*.⁷⁷ According to a widespread interpretation, the akratic's rational failures explain both why she is ignorant and why, unlike the enkratic, she acts badly. The distinctive failure of the akratic is analogous to some condition of ignorance or intellectual impairment: drunkenness, sleep, madness, acting and repeating a lesson without having understood it entirely yet.⁷⁸ The akratic's distinctive state of ignorance entails that she can't be aware that she is acting badly at the moment of action.⁷⁹

This widespread interpretation is, I want to suggest, misguided. The akratic's ignorance is compatible with her awareness that she is acting badly at the moment of action. Her ignorance is also is not meant to explain why, unlike the enkratic, she doesn't act well.⁸⁰ This view can be defended on the basis of three considerations. First, the akratic's ignorance is a failure to have *phronēsis*, and thereby a failure which can equally manifest itself in bad desires and bad action. Second, the akratic is ignorant because she does not grasp the correct reasons for the correct decision. However, she is not necessarily unaware of the content of the correct decision. Third, the failure of the akratic is meant to explain the emergence of a vicious desire which causes a bad action. However, it is not meant to explain why the akratic's bad desire, unlike the enkratic's bad desire, leads to a bad action.

⁷⁶In *NE* 1152a10–14, Aristotle argues that *phronēsis* and intelligence differ with respect to decision, and that the akratic can be intelligent but not *phronimos*. This suggests, I think, that the akratic must lack in some way the correct decision, for the difference between intelligence and *phronēsis* is a difference in the agent's decision (explained by a difference in the agent's ends in *NE* 1144a12–37). See also Charles 2007, p. 201.

⁷⁷Pickavé and Whiting 2008, pp. 324–325 offer a helpful reading of the passage as a general summary, but defend a very different interpretation of akratic ignorance from the one I sketch below.

⁷⁸For these comparisons see the passage above and *NE* 1147a10–25.

⁷⁹See for example Wiggins 1978, Pickavé and Whiting 2008, and Moss 2009. David Charles (in Charles 1984, Charles 2007, Charles 2009, Charles 2011) thinks that the akratic can be aware that she is acting badly, but assumes that her ignorance explains why unlike the akratic she acts badly. Exceptions include McDowell 1998b, Burnyeat 1980, pp. 85 ff. whom I follow in this section. Broadie 1991, pp. 287 ff. suggests that the akratic's ignorance *is* her failure to act, rather than its explanation.

⁸⁰For a fuller defence of the view that Aristotle admits the possibility of this sort of clear-eyed *akrasia* in the *Ethics* and in *De Anima* see chapter 3.4. In this section, I don't provide a full account of *akrasia*, and in particular I do not discuss impetuous *akrasia* (see *NE* 1150b20).

A Phronetic Failure

Let us begin from the idea that the akratic's ignorance corresponds to a lack of *phronēsis*. Aristotle discusses the akratic's ignorance to explain his account of *akrasia* against the backdrop of a famous argument of Socrates':

One might be puzzled about how one can act akratically while judging correctly. Some say he cannot have knowledge (*epistamenon*): for it would be terrible (*deinon*), as Socrates used to think, for knowledge (*epistēmē*) to be in someone, but mastered by something else and dragged around like a slave. Socrates in fact used to oppose the account of *akrasia* in general, in the belief that *akrasia* doesn't exist, for no one acts against what is best while judging [sc. that it is the best], but [sc. he does it] because of ignorance. This argument then contradicts what appears manifestly. If ignorance causes the akratic's state, we must investigate the type of ignorance it is. For it is clear that the akratic before he is in this state doesn't think [sc. he should act in the way he does].⁸¹

The starting point of the Socratic puzzle (*aporia*) that sets the stage for the discussion of the akratic's ignorance is that it would be terrible if knowledge (*epistēmē*) could be mastered and dragged around by something else. After all, knowledge is the most powerful and stable state of all. Hence, the akratic cannot have knowledge and act against it. The thesis that the akratic cannot have knowledge has, according to Aristotle's reconstruction of Socrates' view, a further corollary: it entails that *akrasia* doesn't exist, for no one acts against her knowledge or even her best judgement.

Aristotle finds the main thesis somewhat persuasive, while he believes the corollary to be at first sight implausible (it "contradicts the appearances"). This is why, presumably, he discusses the Socratic puzzle. However, especially in light of *Nicomachean Ethics VI* and *Eudemian Ethics VIII*, we can see that he takes the main thesis to be correct, though with some qualifications. For Aristotle, it is not really knowledge (*epistēmē*) that cannot be mastered and "dragged around like a slave". The strongest intellectual virtue, or the one that really cannot be mastered is *phronēsis*, not *epistēmē*:

⁸¹Ἀπορήσειε δ' ἂν τις πῶς ὑπολαμβάνων ὀρθῶς ἀκρατεύεται τις. ἐπιστάμενον μὲν οὖν οὐ φασί τινες οἷόν τε εἶναι. δεινὸν γὰρ ἐπιστήμης ἐνούσης, ὡς ᾤετο Σωκράτης, ἄλλο τι κρατεῖν καὶ περιέλκειν αὐτὴν ὥσπερ ἀνδράποδον. Σωκράτης μὲν γὰρ ὅλως ἐμάχετο πρὸς τὸν λόγον ὡς οὐκ οὔσης ἀκрасίας. οὐθένεα γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνοντα πράττειν παρὰ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἀλλὰ δι' ἄγνοιαν. οὗτος μὲν οὖν ὁ λόγος ἀμφισβητεῖ τοῖς φαινομένοις ἐναργῶς, καὶ δεόν ζητεῖν περὶ τὸ πάθος, εἰ δι' ἄγνοιαν, τίς ὁ τρόπος γίνεται τῆς ἀγνοίας. ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ οἶεται γε ὁ ἀκρατευόμενος πρὶν ἐν τῷ πάθει γενέσθαι, φανερόν. *NE* 1145b24-32.

Socrates was right when he said that nothing is stronger than *phronēsis*. But he was wrong when he called it *epistēmē*: for *phronēsis* is a virtue but it is not *epistēmē*, but another kind of cognition (*gnōseōs*).⁸²

Hence, Aristotle thinks that there is indeed a kind of intellectual excellence which cannot be dragged around and mastered, though he wouldn't be prepared to call it *epistēmē* in the strict sense. This state is an intellectual virtue too, only of a different sort, and it is called *phronēsis*. This passage suggest that Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics VII* uses the term *epistēmē* to relate to the Socratic puzzle, but in fact he has in mind his account of *phronēsis*. In disentangling the Socratic puzzle, he is drawn to the thesis that *epistēmē* is the strongest thing of all only in so far as *epistēmē* is a place-holder for *phronēsis*.

If the Socratic thesis Aristotle wants to preserve is that the akratic lacks *phronēsis*, the akratic might turn out not to be much different from the enkratic, who suffers from a “phronetic” failure too: both the enkratic and the akratic lack *phronēsis* because their rational part cannot persuade the wayward non-rational part. The enkratic's rational part goes as far as preventing bad action, but is ineffective against bad desires. The akratic's rational part can counteract neither bad desires nor bad conduct. Their rational failure is not different in kind, but in degree or gravity. Looking at the rational part's ability to persuade as the same kind of ability displayed in desire control and in action control mirrors Aristotle's treatment of the listening abilities of the non-rational part in *Nicomachean Ethics I*.⁸³ There, the enkratic's non-rational part listens better than the akratic's because even though it has bad desires, it does not generate bad actions. Such ability to listen can be perfected in the truly temperate or brave person, who lacks bad desires entirely. If the lack of bad non-rational desires and bad conduct are the expression of the gradual improvement of the non-rational part's unified ability

⁸²ὁρθῶς τὸ Σωκρατικόν, ὅτι οὐδὲν ἰσχυρότερον φρονήσεως. ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐπιστήμην ἔφη, οὐκ ὁρθόν· ἀρετὴ γάρ ἐστι καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστήμη, ἀλλὰ γένος ἄλλο γνώσεως' *EE* 1246b34–36, cf. a parallel passage in *NE* 1146a5–10. There is a long standing controversy about the meaning of *phronēsis* in the *Eudemian Ethics* which I won't be able to settle here (see, *inter alia*, Jaeger 1934, p. 239 and Rowe 1970 on the thesis that Aristotle does not distinguish between theoretical and practical knowledge in the *EE*, and Gauthier and Jolif 1970, p. 466 ff. and Von Arnim 1927, pp. 27 ff. for the thesis that he does. See Kenny 1978, ch. 7 for discussion). With regard to this passage in particular, however, it seems to me clear that in contrasting *phronēsis* with *epistēmē* Aristotle implies a usage similar to the one in *NE VI* and perhaps even suggests that *phronēsis* is different from contemplation (see Natali 1984, fn. 32). In this passage, just as in *NE* 1145b24–32, Aristotle seems to respond directly to *Prot.* 352c2–7. Here, I only engage with Aristotle's views on the account of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras*, without engaging with a close analysis of the Platonic text. For the connection between the thesis that no one errs knowingly and the thesis that no one errs willingly in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* see Segvic 2000.

⁸³*NE* 1102b27–29.

to listen, they can be taken to involve the parallel improvement of the rational part's unified ability to persuade. Bad desires and bad actions are the expression of the same rational failure.

Both Ignorant and Aware of her Vicious Action

In light of the idea that the ignorance of the akratic is a phronetic failure, we can move on to the second consideration and analyse what this failure involves at the cognitive level. For this analysis it is useful to consider, in turn, why the akratic's decision is neither fully correct nor fully incorrect, and why akratics are similar to madmen, students, actors and people who are asleep.

Aristotle seems to have ambivalent views about the akratic's decision. There are at least two passages in which he argues that the akratic's decision is not bad, or not too different from a virtuous person's decision. At *NE* 1152a17, quoted above, the akratic's decision is called decent (*epieikēs*). Similarly, the syllogistic account of *akrasia* implies that the akratic forms the correct decision to avoid the vicious action:

When someone has the universal [sc. belief] hindering him from tasting, and he has the second [sc. belief] that everything sweet is pleasant and this is sweet (and this is active), but it happens that desire (*epithumia*) is present, then [sc. the belief] says to avoid this, but the desire leads, as it is capable of moving each of the [sc. bodily] parts. And so it happens that in a way he acts akratically under the influence of reasoning and belief, which is not contrary to the correct *logos* in its own right, but incidentally—for the desire is contrary, not the belief.⁸⁴

Here, the akratic's reasoning is broken down into a complex syllogism.⁸⁵ The conclusion of the syllogism reached by the akratic is the belief that the sweet thing should be avoided. Arguably, this belief is closely connected to the decision to avoid the sweet thing (*phuegein touto*). The syllogism in question is meant to describe the akratic's

⁸⁴ ὅταν οὖν ἡ μὲν καθόλου ἐνῆ καλύουσα γεύεσθαι, ἡ δέ, ὅτι πᾶν γλυκὺ ἡδύ, τουτὶ δὲ γλυκὺ (αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ), τύχη δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα, ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο, ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει· κινεῖν γὰρ ἕκαστον δύναται τῶν μορίων· ὥστε συμβαίνει ὑπὸ λόγου πως καὶ δόξης ἀκρατεῦεσθαι, οὐκ ἐναντίας δὲ καθ' αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός—ἡ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία ἐναντία, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡ δόξα—τῷ ὁρθῷ λόγῳ. *NE* 1147a30–b3. I discuss this passage in chapter 3.4, where I defend the thesis that the weak akratic gets to the conclusion of her reasoning.

⁸⁵ I follow Kenny 1966 in representing the akratic's reasoning as involving one syllogism for ease of exposition, but many others think the akratic's reasoning must be broken down into two separate syllogisms (e.g. Moss 2009, p. 143, Pickavé and Whiting 2008, Walsh 1960, p. 106 and Aquinas *Sententiae Libri Ethicorum* VII.III: C 1347-1348). The literature on the syllogistic account of *akrasia* is vast, and I don't engage with it exhaustively here.

reasoning or deliberation. Since decisions are deliberative desires, it is plausible to take the belief formed at the end of the syllogism as the cognitive basis of akratic's decision. This belief is said *not* to be contrary to the correct reasoning (*orthos logos*) in itself, but only incidentally. Hence, despite the difficulties this passage presents, it suggests fairly clearly that the cognitive basis of the akratic's decision is not entirely mistaken.

Though not entirely mistaken, the akratic's decision cannot be fully correct. For Aristotle, only the virtuous or good person has the correct decision.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the akratic's lack of knowledge seems to concern precisely the conclusion of her practical syllogism and, thereby, the cognitive basis of her decision:

Since the last proposition is a belief about something perceptible and it is in charge of action, this is the one that the person who is under the influence of this *pathos* doesn't have, or the way he has it is not knowledge of it, but merely saying the words like the drunk who says the words of Empedocles. And since the last term doesn't seem to be universal or expressive of knowledge in the same way as the universal term, what Socrates sought to prove seems to come about. For what seems to be knowledge in the strict sense is not present when the *pathos* occurs, nor is it dragged about because of the *pathos*, but it is only perceptual knowledge [sc. that is present when the *pathos* occurs and is dragged about].⁸⁷

The person afflicted with a certain *pathos* (either *akrasia* in particular or bad desires in general) doesn't have, does not strictly speaking know, or merely utters the last premiss which is in charge of action. This has been taken to suggest that the akratic is doubly at fault with respect to her decision. First, her decision is not fully correct, and second, she lacks epistemic access to its content.⁸⁸

⁸⁶At *NE* 1139a20 ff. Aristotle implies that correct decision, like good action, requires both excellence in character and intellectual excellence. This claim seems to be supported by his view that looking at someone's decision is a good way to assess their character (*EE* 1228a2–5). If we couldn't tell between akratics and virtuous people by studying their decisions, decision would not be a mark or excellence in character. On the link between correct decision and virtuous character, see also Irwin 1989, p. 61 ff.

⁸⁷ἐπεὶ δ' ἡ τελευταία πρότασις δόξα τε αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κυρία τῶν πράξεων, ταύτην ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐν τῷ πάθει ὄν, ἢ οὕτως ἔχει ὡς οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἔχειν ἐπίστασθαι ἀλλὰ λέγειν ὥσπερ ὁ οἰνωμένος τὰ Ἐμπεδοκλέους. καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ καθόλου μηδ' ἐπιστημονικὸν ὁμοίως εἶναι δοκεῖν τῷ καθόλου τὸν ἔσχατον ὅρον καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ ἐζήτει Σωκράτης συμβαίνειν· οὐ γὰρ τῆς κυρίως ἐπιστήμης εἶναι δοκούσης παρούσης γίνεται τὸ πάθος, οὐδ' αὕτη περιέλεται διὰ τὸ πάθος, ἀλλὰ τῆς αἰσθητικῆς. *NE* 1147b10–18.

⁸⁸Irwin 1989, for example, takes these two failures to be related but separate and occurring at different times.

However, it is hard to prove on the basis of this passage that all akratics are doubly at fault with respect to their decision.⁸⁹ The akratic can say the words relating to the correct decision, even though she lacks “knowledge in the strict sense” of its cognitive basis. This suggests that she can have some grasp of the content of the correct decision, and this grasp is diminished or faulty in a single way: it is not a knowledgeable grasp. The emphasis on the akratic’s lack of a knowledgeable grasp implies that what is wrong with her are the reasons for her decision. The akratic arrives to the right conclusion and the right decision for the wrong reasons, or through a wrong middle term. Hence, she does not count as knowing strictly speaking, for knowledge requires grasping the correct reasons and explanations. For example, the akratic concludes that this sweet is bad and chooses to avoid it, but fails to grasp why it is bad. Perhaps, she takes the sweet to be bad because it is fattening, and not because it is unhealthy. We could also imagine a more plausible case in which *akrasia* is displayed towards things we desire even though they are not ours to take: for example, a double portion of cake when there are just enough single portions for everyone. In a case like this, the akratic might take the double portion to be bad because it is fattening, and not because someone would remain without cake if she takes too much of it.⁹⁰

This reconstruction makes sense of the syllogistic account of *akrasia* without implying that the akratic cannot be aware of the content of the correct decision. It explains why the akratic lacks knowledge strictly speaking of the last premiss. It also clarifies Aristotle’s account of the akratic’s decision. The decision is in one respect correct, for the akratic is right to take the vicious action to be bad and to choose to avoid it. However, the decision is not correct in other respects, for it is not backed up by the correct explanatory account.⁹¹ In addition, this account explains why the akratic’s (last) belief is contrary to the correct *logos* only incidentally: the akratic’s conclusion has the correct content, but it is not held for the right reasons.⁹²

Some might object that the akratic cannot reach and be aware of the correct conclusion in the way I have described. By Aristotle’s own standards, if one reaches the conclusion of a practical syllogism, one necessarily or immediately acts on it.⁹³ The

⁸⁹Impetuous akratics might be doubly at fault because they don’t get to the conclusion of their reasoning. However, weak akratics differ from them in this respect (*NE* 1150b20 ff.).

⁹⁰This account is not in tension with Aristotle’s view that, for the purposes of *akrasia*, it does not matter whether one lacks *epistēmē* or *doxa* (*NE* 1146b24 ff.). That point is not meant to elucidate that the akratic might get to the right conclusion for the right reasons, but to elucidate that what matters for *akrasia* (or lack of it) is not the strength or weakness of the conviction (*pistis*).

⁹¹See also Irwin 1989, p. 84.

⁹²*NE* 1147b1–3.

⁹³*NE* 1147a25–31.

last belief or the conclusion is in charge (*kuria*) of action, and hence the akratic cannot be aware of it, or she would act on it.⁹⁴ This objection, however, is not compelling. Aristotle's view might be that conclusions are in charge of actions only if you hold them with the appropriately knowledgeable grasp. In addition, he can be interpreted as arguing that actions inevitably follow our practical reasoning unless bad desires interfere with it.⁹⁵

To prove that the akratic (or at least the weak akratic) really is guilty of a single cognitive failure, i.e. a failure to grasp the reasons for the correct decision, we can't merely rely on the syllogistic account of *akrasia*. We must also consider Aristotle's view that the akratic is in a state similar to the drunkard's, the dreamer's, the student's or the actor's. This view is meant to explain why the akratic has knowledge and does not use it, or more specifically why the akratic somehow has and does not have knowledge.⁹⁶

The comparisons with the student and the actor are apt to emphasise that akratics do not grasp the correct reasons for their decision, but can grasp its content. Actors or students can recite the correct proof for a conclusion because they learnt it by heart. If you learn a proof by heart and you are merely able parrot it like a (bad) student or an actor, you might have grasped the content of its conclusion. However, you won't have grasped the explanatory reasons that prove it. Thus, you might be victim of an explanatory failure similar to the one I have attributed to Aristotle's akratic.

The comparisons between *akrasia*, sleep, madness and drunkenness, on the contrary, could be suitable to emphasise that akratics don't grasp the content of the correct decision.⁹⁷ But it is not obvious that this is their purpose. Aristotle thinks that sleepers can have lucid dreams and be aware of the falsity of the appearances in their dreams.⁹⁸ Furthermore, he compares akratics to people who are just tipsy drunk (*oinomenoi*), as opposed to those who are in an unconscious drunken state (*methuon*). If we are simply tipsy drunk, as opposed to dead-drunk, we can be aware of what we are doing, though our awareness might be a bit 'off-beat' and punctuated by false appearances.⁹⁹ Aristotle thinks that while sleeping and drunk we can be aware of our condition. For this reason, it would have been odd for him to choose these as paradigmatic examples of our inability to have access to the content of a decision we have formed.

⁹⁴*NE* 1147b10.

⁹⁵See further Charles 1984, pp. 128–132 and Charles 2009, pp. 53 ff.

⁹⁶*NE* 1147a10–23, *NE* 1147b10–18 and *NE* 1152a5–17.

⁹⁷*Phys.* 247b13–a6, *GA* 735a9–11. For discussion see e.g. Moss 2009, pp. 142 ff.

⁹⁸*Insomn.* 459a6–8.

⁹⁹On the distinction between being very drunk and tipsy in Aristotle, see Charles 2009, pp. 50 and ff.

Perhaps, a more significant characteristic of these states is that they are states in which we are especially subject to false appearances we seem unable to remove. At *Insomn.* 461b28–a4, for example, one of the abilities that sleep disables is the ability to push away (*ekkrouō*) and obscure (*aphanizō*) sensory and phantastic appearances. The point of the comparison, thus, is that drunkenness, sleep and madness are states in which we can't persuade our rational part out of its false appearances, though we might be aware of their falsity. These states exemplify a persuasive rational failure, rather than a failure of awareness.¹⁰⁰

Akratic Desires and Akratic Actions

The idea that the comparison with madmen, sleepers and actors is not meant to emphasise a failure of awareness but a failure of persuasion leads naturally to the last consideration about the phronetic failure of the akratic. The akratic's ignorance explains why like drunkards, sleepers and madmen she is unable to remove desire causing false evaluative appearances. These appearances give rise to desires to act badly, which ultimately cause bad actions. The akratic's ignorance of the correct reasons for the correct decision is not meant to explain why the akratic's bad desires, unlike the enkratic's, cause bad actions. It is meant to explain the emergence of her bad desires, which cause her bad action.

This point can be expanded further if we reconsider Aristotle's concessions to Socrates' account of *akrasia*:

... and since the last term doesn't seem to be universal or expressive of knowledge in the same way as the universal term, what Socrates sought to prove seems to come about. For what seems to be knowledge in the strict sense (*tēs kuriōs epistēmēs*) is not present when the *pathos* occurs, nor is it dragged about because of the *pathos*, but it is only perceptual knowledge (*tēs aisthētikēs*) [sc. that is present when the *pathos* occurs and is dragged about].¹⁰¹

Aristotle concedes that the Socratic view that the akratic is ignorant is in a way correct. The akratic lacks knowledge of last term, i.e. the conclusion, which is neither a universal

¹⁰⁰*Insomn.* 460b16–20. See also *Prob.* 874a5 ff. and *Prob.* 871a7 ff. for the suggestion that drunks are more prone to imagine false slights and to experience perceptual illusions, such as for example seeing double. In addition, Aristotle's comparison of the akratic with the drunk and the mad might be meant to emphasize that *akrasia* is, in a sense, an illness with bodily causes (*NE* 1147b7–10). For a Platonic analogue see *Tim.* 86b1 ff. and for further discussion see Müller 2015a, pp. 24 ff. Francis 2011, Van der Eijk 2013.

¹⁰¹*NE* 1147b14–18, see above.

nor is it expressive of knowledge like a universal. The akratic may grasp the particular conclusion (e.g. recycling this is good, or best), but her grasp fails to be expressive of knowledge because the conclusion is drawn for the wrong reasons (e.g., because it pleases her friends). This is meant to explain why the *pathos* that characterizes the akratic does not occur in presence of and does not overcome “knowledge in the strict sense” (*tēs kuriōs epistēmēs*) but only “perceptual knowledge” (*tēs aisthētikēs*). The exact meaning of this last sentence has been the object of much controversy.¹⁰² Part of the controversy is due, I think, to the fact that it contains three terms that demand clarification: “*pathos*”, “knowledge in the strict sense” and “perceptual knowledge”. If we pause on what these terms stand for in this context, the meaning of the sentence becomes however clearer. Aristotle’s point here is that the akratic’s ignorance or lack of *phronēsis* explains why she has a bad desire (*pathos*) which causes a bad action.

Since Aristotle here is engaging with the Socratic account of *akrasia*, it is natural to take “what *seems* to be knowledge (*epistēmē*) in the strict sense” to stand for *phronēsis*, rather than *epistēmē*.¹⁰³ After all, one of Socrates’ mistakes was precisely to take *phronēsis* and *epistēmē* to be the same kind of rational excellence.¹⁰⁴ The idea, then, must be that the akratic’s *pathos* does not occur in presence of *phronēsis*, nor does it drag *phronēsis* around.

The *pathos* neither occurs in presence of nor does it overcome *phronēsis*, but it overcomes and it occurs in the presence of perceptual knowledge. By perceptual knowledge Aristotle cannot mean *phronēsis*, for he thinks that the akratic is never *phronimos*. What he might refer to with this expression, which is only found in this context, is a kind of knowledge which is like perception and *phronēsis* discriminative and of particulars, but unlike *phronēsis* is not persuasive. The reason why perceptual knowledge is not persuasive, presumably, is that it is not appropriately explanatory.

In light of these clarifications, we have a good reason to think that in its two occurrences in this sentence “*pathos*” stands for the akratic’s bad desire.¹⁰⁵ The *pathos*

¹⁰²See e.g. Broadie and Rowe 2002, p. 393 and Stewart 1892, pp. 161-164 for the view that it should be emended.

¹⁰³Pickavé and Whiting 2008, pp. 366 ff. suggest that *epistēmē* in the strict sense corresponds to *phronēsis* and to knowledge of universals. If one takes knowledge in the strict sense to stand for knowledge of universals, Aristotle seems to contradict himself here, for he has just claimed that the akratic lacks knowledge of particulars (see Pickavé and Whiting 2008, Section IV for a defence of the view that Aristotle does not in fact take the failure to be about particulars, and Broadie and Rowe 2002, p. 393 and Stewart 1892, pp. 161-164 who emend the text so that it allows *akrasia* to occur in presence of knowledge of universals).

¹⁰⁴*EE* 1246b34–36.

¹⁰⁵*Pathos* can be taken to stand for a bad desire throughout *NE* 1147b10–18, or just in the last two occurrences at *b* 16–18. It would however be implausible to take “*pathos*” to suddenly change meaning in *b* 16–18. See Pickavé and Whiting 2008, p. 368 fn. 74.

is said (i) to occur in the presence of perceptual knowledge – but not *phronēsis* – and (ii) to overcome perceptual knowledge – but not *phronēsis* – . The bad desire arises in the presence of unpersuasive knowledge, and overcomes it by leading the akratic to act against it. If by *pathos* Aristotle meant the condition of *akrasia*, or the akratic act, it would be unclear why he felt the need to specify that the *pathos* overcomes a certain type of knowledge in addition to arising in its presence.

This analysis suggests, therefore, that the akratic's ignorance, her lack of *phronēsis*, is meant to explain the emergence of a bad desire (*pathos*), which in turn causes a bad action. It is not meant to explain, more particularly, why the akratic, unlike the enkratic, acts on bad desires.

We can now take stock. The akratic's ignorance is a phronetic failure amounting to a failure to grasp correct explanations which shows why the akratic has bad desires. Aristotle concedes to Socrates that the akratic lacks knowledge of the right reasons that support the correct decision. Even though the akratic can arrive at the correct decision, she does not know its cognitive basis as a virtuous person would, for her conclusion is not backed up by the correct explanation. This is why, both by Aristotle's and Socrates' standards, the akratic is ignorant, or lacks *phronēsis*. Although Aristotle does make some important concessions to Socrates, he does not concede that being aware of one's own *akrasia* at the moment of action is impossible. The akratic can get to a decent decision and be aware of it at the moment of action.¹⁰⁶

In conclusion, the ignorance of the akratic explains why she has bad desires. She lacks the characteristically persuasive explanations of *phronēsis*, and is for this reason prone to bad desires. In this view, therefore, the akratic's ignorance is compatible with the thesis that akratics experience conflicting desires.¹⁰⁷ However, the ignorance of the akratic does not explain why she is more prone than the enkratic to act badly. In fact, in so far as they both lack *phronēsis*, the akratic and the enkratic can be seen as being similarly ignorant.¹⁰⁸

This account of *akrasia* raises the question whether the akratic could be cured if only she grasped the correct reasons why the particular bad actions she desires to do

¹⁰⁶See chapter 3.4.

¹⁰⁷*NE* 1102b13–25. Reconciling the view that the akratic is not aware she is acting badly with the view that she is conflicted is, for obvious reasons, hard. It is not, however, impossible, as Cook Wilson 1879, pp. 48–49 used to think. As Moss argues in her Moss 2009 the akratic's ignorance might be the outcome of her struggle.

¹⁰⁸In Irwin 2007, pp. 185 ff. the error of the akratic is described as similar to the error of an enkratic too. In Irwin's view, however, the error doesn't lie in the incorrect grasp of right reasons, but in the inability to think of one's life as whole and in the inability to assess the cost of resisting the force of (bad) desires.

are bad. Aristotle’s remarks on the curability of *akrasia* are scanty, but they suggest that at least some akratics might be cured in this way. At *NE* 1152a25, he writes that impetuous akratics can be cured if they are taught to deliberate correctly. He adds that those akratics who are such because of bad habits and not because of nature can be cured too. Hence, some badly habituated weak akratics might be able to rid themselves of their bad desires if they grasp the correct reasons why these desires are bad. Aristotle’s remarks on the difficulty to cure natural *akrasia*, phobia, addiction and diseased desires, however, suggest that in some cases grasping the correct reasons would not suffice.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps, he believed that for people who are in these conditions even grasping correct reasons and having the right rational pleasures would not be enough to possess *phronēsis* as a persuasive rational excellence. Whether or not he thought that some other cure could work for these akratics, however, is not easy to extrapolate from the textual evidence we have. Neither is it easy to work out, exactly, what for Aristotle makes us akratic by nature.

6.5 Conclusion

I argued that *phronēsis* is a persuasive rational excellence, whose task is to generate good desires and good conduct. *Phronēsis* grasps particularised explanatory accounts and generates rational pleasures suitable to persuade the non-rational part. Since *phronēsis* is a persuasive excellence, people who act and desire badly couldn’t be *phronimoi* even if they grasped the correct explanations and had the correct rational pleasures. A rational part falls short of the required persuasive excellence until it manages to effectively control the non-rational part. This suggests that Aristotle adopted a distinctive standard of rational excellence for *phronēsis*. *Phronēsis*, like *epistēmē*, grasps explanatory accounts and generates rational pleasures. Unlike *epistēmē* and unlike its productive counterpart *technē*, it must also be effective in eliminating false evaluative appearances that cause desires to act viciously.

Aristotle’s characterization of *phronēsis* as a distinctive kind of rational excellence is backed up by his studies on human cognitive psychology. *Phronēsis* is a distinctively human rational excellence because its commands are directed to the non-rational part of the soul and tailored to capture its attention. Nonetheless, *phronēsis* remains similar enough to its more “divine” counterparts like scientific knowledge to count as rational. After all, similarly to how scientific knowledge grasps true explanatory accounts of natural phenomena, *phronēsis* grasps true explanatory accounts of what is good and

¹⁰⁹*NE VII. 5.*

bad for beings like us. In the same way, the non-rational part of the human soul enables beings like us to achieve *phronēsis*' distinctive standard of rational excellence in virtue of its peculiar characteristics. Since its cognitive range can be expanded and its attention suitably directed, a human non-rational part is sophisticated enough to respond to the rational pleasures and particularised explanations typical of *phronēsis*. Nonetheless, the non-rational part of the human soul remains sufficiently close to the cognitive make-up of a non-human animal soul. It is incapable, on its own, to grasp universal explanatory accounts, and it can lead us to act on desire causing false evaluative appearances.

I also suggested that this account of *phronēsis* may be used in order to shed light on three features of Aristotle's account of *akrasia*: first, the akratic's ignorance is a lack of *phronēsis*; second, the akratic is ignorant because she does not grasp the correct reason why her action is bad, and not because she is unaware that she is acting badly; third, the akratic's ignorance explains why she has bad desires, but not why akratic desires, unlike enkratic desires, lead to bad actions. Aristotle's views on the ignorance of the akratic do not explain why she acts differently from the enkratic. However, they do allow for the existence of akratics who are aware, while acting, that their action is bad.

Conclusion

Aristotle's study of human cognition has far-reaching consequences for his ethical theory, some of which are more radical can controversial than others. The most radical consequence is that being virtuous requires getting rid of those false evaluative non-rational appearances that cause desires to act viciously. This condition on the achievement of virtue might seem excessively demanding, especially if applied to creatures like us. We might doubt that it would ever be possible for a human being to reach such a harmonic and perfect cognitive make-up, and thereby doubt that it might ever be possible for us to become good.

A second, and related, controversial consequence is that *phronēsis* is a persuasive rational excellence. The explanatory accounts and the rational pleasures characteristic of *phronēsis* are suitable for the generation of correct rational and non-rational desires. *Phronēsis*, in addition, requires the cooperation of a responsive non-rational part of the soul. If one does not grasp the correct explanatory accounts, or one lacks the required rational pleasures or one has a morbidly unresponsive non-rational part of the soul, one cannot be *phronimos*. This account of *phronēsis* also enables Aristotle to claim that akratic is ignorant even though she can be aware that her action is bad while she acts. The akratic is ignorant because she does not grasp, unlike the practically wise person, *why* a particular vicious action is to be avoided here and now. However, she can be aware that this particular action is the one she should avoid, and yet perform it.

The less radical consequences of my study concern the cognitive background of moral education and the analogies and differences between human and animal cognition. On my view, Aristotle succeeded in his attempt to provide a coherent account of the position humans occupy between the other animals and gods. We are similar to the other animals because to a certain extent we live by perception, *phantasia* and experience. We are similar to gods because we can think and to a certain extent we live by thought. At the same time, our cognitive life is "peculiar to us". Human thought has to address and cooperate with the non-rational part of the human soul, which

sometimes hinders its functionings. Human perception can be trained and aided by memory for the sake of its collaboration with thought, as well as being informed and directed by thought.

The peculiar features of human cognition turn out to play a key role in the theory of cognition at the basis of Aristotle's ethics. The fact that human perception can be trained matters for moral education because moral education is at least partially about training us to perceptually recognise and enjoy fine actions and characters. Similarly, the fact that human thought is suitable for communicating with human non-rational cognition allows it to control and direct our non-rational part. Thus, what might initially look like a limit of human thought when compared with divine thought is actually what enables us to achieve a distinctive kind of rational excellence: *phronēsis*. This suggests that Aristotle himself followed the advice he gives to politicians and ethicists at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He constructed his ethical theory on the basis of his study of the soul: his ethics is carefully designed to fit the cognitive limits and the cognitive excellences that characterize the rational animal.

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