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INSTITUTO DE FILOSOFIA E CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS

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Moral Actions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:
reason, emotion, and moral development

Ações Morais na *Ética a Nicômaco*:
razão, emoção e desenvolvimento moral

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To make the ancients speak, we must feed them with our own blood.

Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff

Não devemos fugir da *vita activa* para a *vita contemplativa*, nem vice-versa, mas variando entre as duas, estar sempre a caminho, nas duas ter a nossa morada, participar de ambas.

O Jogo das Contas de Vidro, Herman Hesse

E aprendi que se depende sempre

De tanta, muita, diferente gente

Toda pessoa sempre é as marcas

Das lições diárias de outras tantas pessoas.

E é tão bonito quando a gente entende

Que a gente é tanta gente onde quer que a gente vá

E é tão bonito quando a gente sente

Que nunca está sozinho por mais que pense estar.

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Resumo

Na *Ética a Nicômaco*, Aristóteles argumenta que cabe ao caráter e à razão delimitar e implementar as ações morais. O texto aristotélico, no entanto, traz inúmeras dificuldades exegéticas e filosóficas quando se tenta definir precisamente qual o papel desempenhado pelo caráter e pela razão nas ações morais. Há um conjunto de passagens na *Ética a Nicômaco* em que Aristóteles aparentemente defende a seguinte distribuição de tarefas: ao caráter cabe a tarefa de adotar os fins morais, enquanto à razão, representada pela *phronesis*, cabe a tarefa de delimitar como promovê-los. A divisão de trabalho proposta é problemática, pois ela outorga a função de adotar os fins morais a uma capacidade que Aristóteles classifica como não-racional, além de restringir a jurisdição da razão a apenas encontrar os “meios” para alcançar esses fins. Entretanto, em outras passagens, Aristóteles aparentemente argumenta em favor de uma divisão de tarefas diferente dessa. Em tais passagens, o caráter aparece sob a tutela da razão, que lhe serve de guia. As afirmações de Aristóteles parecem revelar uma certa inconsistência na formulação da distribuição de tarefas entre caráter e razão. Na presente tese, eu investigo as diferentes formulações feitas por Aristóteles em relação aos papéis desempenhados pelo caráter e pela razão na promoção das ações morais. Defendo que, numa alma virtuosamente organizada, a razão possui o papel de guiar o caráter em relação aos fins a serem perseguidos.

Palavras-Chave: Filosofia Antiga – Psicologia Moral – Ética – Desenvolvimento Moral – Educação Moral

Abstract

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that both character and reason are responsible for delimiting and implementing the moral actions. The Aristotelian text, nonetheless, brings several exegetical and philosophical issues when one tries to determine exactly which are the roles played by character and reason in moral actions. There is a set of passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which Aristotle apparently defends the following distribution of roles: the character is responsible for adopting the moral goals while reason has under its responsibility the task of determining how to achieve the goals. This distribution of roles, however, is problematic. It ascribes the role of adopting the moral goals to a capacity that Aristotle classifies as non-rational; furthermore, it restricts the role of reason to find the “means” to achieve those goals. However, in other passages, Aristotle seems to argue in favour of a different distribution of tasks. In such passages, the character is under the sway of reason, which is presented as the character's guide to moral issues. Aristotle's formulations seem to reveal a certain inconsistency in the distribution of roles between character and reason. In this thesis, I investigate Aristotle's different formulations with respect to the roles played by character and reason in the performance of moral actions. I defend that, in a virtuously structured soul, reason plays the role of guiding character in regard to the goals to be pursued.

Keywords: Ancient Philosophy – Moral Psychology – Ethics – Moral Development – Moral Education

Abbreviations

APo = *Analytica Posteriora*

Cael. = *de Caelo*

Cat. = *Categories*

DA = *de Anima*

EE = *Eudemian Ethics*

NE = *Nicomachean Ethics*

MA = *de Motu Animalium*

Met. = *Metaphysics*

PA = *Parts of Animals*

Pol. = *Politics*

Rh. = *Rhetoric*

Top. = *Topics*

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Introduction

In the *NE*, the reader finds a set of claims in which Aristotle apparently assigns to virtue of character the task of setting the moral goals, while the responsibility for the things towards the goals (τὰ πρὸς τὰ τέλη)¹ – expression sometimes translated as “means” – is assigned to *phronesis*:

T1: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ² τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθον, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον (*NE* 1144a7-9).

For virtue makes the goal right, while *phronesis* makes what leads to it right.

T2: [...] οὐκ ἔσται ἡ προαίρεσις ὀρθὴ ἄνευ φρονήσεως οὐδ' ἄνευ ἀρετῆς· ἡ μὲν γὰρ τὸ τέλος ἡ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος ποιεῖ πράττειν (*NE* 1145a4-6).

[...] *prohairesis* will not be correct without *phronesis*, or without virtue; for one causes us to act in relation to the end, the other in relation to what forwards the end.

T3: [...] εἰ οὖν, ὥσπερ λέγεται, ἐκούσιοι εἰσιν αἱ ἀρεταὶ καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἕξεων συναίτιοι πως αὐτοὶ ἔσμεν, καὶ τῶ ποιῶ τινες εἶναι τὸ τέλος τοιόνδε τιθέμεθα (*NE* 1114b22-24).

[...] we ourselves are partly responsible, in a way, for our dispositions, and it is by virtue of being people of a certain sort that we suppose the end to be of a certain sort.

T4: ἡ γὰρ ἀρετὴ καὶ μοχθηρία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἢ μὲν φθείρει ἢ δὲ σφύζει, ἐν δὲ ταῖς πράξεσι τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα ἀρχή, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς αἱ ὑποθέσεις· οὐτε δὲ ἐκεῖ ὁ λόγος διδασκαλικὸς τῶν ἀρχῶν οὐτε ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλ' ἀρετὴ ἢ φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν (*NE* 1151a15-19).

For virtue and badness respectively keep healthy, and corrupt, the fundamental starting point, and in action this is that for the sake of which, just as in mathematical arguments the initial posits are starting points. Neither in that case, then, does reasoning teach us the starting points, nor does it in the present one; instead, it is virtue, innate or resulting from habit-training, that gives us correct judgement about the starting point³.

Passages T1 and T2 establish in general lines the labour division between virtue of character and *phronesis* regarding the delimitation and implementation of the moral actions. Passages T3 and T4 seem to give support to the claim expounded in T1 and T2, according to which virtue of character is responsible for setting the moral goals. On several occasions, Aristotle assigns to *phronesis* the responsibility for deliberation (*NE* 1140a25-26, 1140a30-31, 1141b8-10, and 1142b31-32) and so *phronesis* becomes incumbent to what Aristotle describes as “the things towards the goal” (*NE* 1111b26-27, 1112b11-12, 1112b33-34, 1113a13-14, and 1113b3-4). The last

¹ Throughout *NE* III (1111b26, 1112b11-2, 1112b33-4, 1113a14-5, and 1113b3-4) and once in *NE* VI (1145a6), Aristotle makes reference to the object of deliberation with the Greek expression “τὰ πρὸς τὰ τέλη” and expressions slightly different. The word “means” is sometimes used to translate into English the Greek expression; such translation option, however, restricts considerably the philosophical value of the Greek expression in virtue of suggesting the idea of instrumental means. I discuss in detail this philological, exegetical, and philosophical question in chapter 4. For ease of reference, I sometimes employ the expression “means” in this thesis, but I do so without any commitment to the idea of instrumental means.

² Frequently, Aristotle makes use of the word “virtue” (ἀρετή) alone as shorthand for “virtue of character” (ἠθικὴ ἀρετή). The following passages may be quoted as examples: *NE* 1103a24, 1103a31, 1103b7, 1103b14, 1103b27, 1103b34, 1104a19, 1104a33, 1104b9, 1104b13, 1104b24, 1104b27, 1105a9, 1105a11, and 1105a13..

³ The translated passages of the *NE* used in this thesis were taken from Rowe (2002). On several occasions, I modified slightly or substantially Rowe’s translation where I considered it necessary. Besides Rowe’s translation, the following English translations were consulted: Irwin (1999), Crisp (2000), Ross revised by Lesley Brown, and Reeve (2014).

point is affirmed once again in the passages T1 and T2⁴. Taken without further considerations, the labour division that derives at first glance from the quoted passages does not seem to be philosophically or exegetically problematic. Nonetheless, when we go into detail about the moral psychology underlying the characterization of virtue of character and *phronesis*, several pressing questions arise, which impose to the interpreter the task of comprehending the intricacies involved in the interplay between both virtues in their joint enterprise to promote moral actions.

In *NE* I.13, Aristotle sets out to classify the virtues. This classification is based on a division of the human soul restricted to the investigative interests of the *NE* (*NE* 1102a23-5)⁵. According to the classification proposed by Aristotle, human soul can be divided into two main parts⁶: one rational (*λόγον ἔχον*) and the other non-rational (*ἄλογος*) (*NE* 1102a27-8). These parts have some subdivisions. In the part called non-rational, one part is responsible for nourishment and growth. It is labelled vegetative (*NE* 1102a23-33). This part of the soul, however, brings little or no contribution to the ethical investigation. Its domain does not involve any activity that might be considered relevant to the moral life. The other subdivision is described as “appetitive and, in general, desiderative” (*τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν*) (*NE* 1102b30). Aristotle claims that this part listens to, obeys, and somehow partakes in reason (*NE* 1102b25-8). This part opposes reason in cases of *akrasia* (*NE* 1102b16-23) and also gives up pursuing its own aims in favour of reason’s purposes in cases of *enkrateia* (*NE* 1102b26-7). According to Aristotle, the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul might also be taken to be rational in a very peculiar sense. When Aristotle describes that part as rational, he makes use of a metaphor and says that it is rational in the same way as a person who listens to his father and friends (*NE* 1102b31-3). Such metaphor is used to make reference to the relation of obedience that the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul should hold in regard to the part of the soul that possesses reason strictly speaking. The passage does not seem to introduce the claim that the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul is somehow rational strictly speaking. What appears to be defended by Aristotle is that such part of the soul is open to reason’s exhortations and is influenced by it. In addition, Aristotle recognizes the existence of a rational part of the soul strictly speaking by classifying it with the descriptions “κυρίως” and “ἐν αὐτῷ” (*NE* 1103a2). To establish a division of virtues, Aristotle appeals to the distinction between two ways of being said rational:

T5: διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν διαφορὰν ταύτην· λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικὰς τὰς δὲ ἠθικὰς, σοφίαν μὲν καὶ σύνεσιν καὶ φρόνησιν διανοητικὰς,

⁴ Moss also outlines this view from these passages (2011, p. 205).

⁵ Here I offer a very sketchy exposition of *NE* I.13 with the unique purpose of introducing the *vexata quaestio* I am concerned with in this thesis. A detailed scrutiny of the passage is found in chapter 1.

⁶ A discussion about the use of the mereological vocabulary regarding the human soul is found in section 1.8.

ἐλευθεριότητα δὲ καὶ σωφροσύνην ἠθικάς. λέγοντες γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἥθους οὐ λέγομεν ὅτι σοφὸς ἢ συνετὸς ἀλλ' ὅτι πρᾶος ἢ σώφρων· ἐπαινοῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν σοφὸν κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν· τῶν ἕξεων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινετὰς ἀρετὰς λέγομεν (*NE* 1103a3-10).

Virtue too is divided according to this difference; for we call some of them virtues of thought, others virtues of character—theoretical wisdom, comprehension, and *phronesis* on the one hand counting on the side of the virtues of thought, generosity and temperance counting among those of character. For when we talk about character, we do not say that someone is wise, or has comprehension, but rather that he is mild or temperate; but we do also praise someone wise for his disposition, and the dispositions we praise are the ones we call “virtues”.

In this passage, Aristotle officially establishes his classification of the virtues. Right before this passage, Aristotle had claimed that the rational part is said in two ways: either having reason in itself or insofar as it obeys reason. Now such distinction is used as a criterion to demarcate the virtues. Virtues of character are assigned to the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul, while virtues of thought are assigned to the part said rational in the strict sense⁷.

The *vexata quaestio* that arises from the passages quoted is that *phronesis*, which is a virtue of the rational part of the soul, would not have jurisdiction over the choice of the moral goals, having its duties restricted to deliberating about the things towards the goals. According to the passages, the jurisdiction over the goals would be assigned to a virtue of a non-rational part of the soul (*NE* 1102b13-4 and 1102b28-33), which has its origin in habit (*NE* 1103a17). In such a case, the unavoidable conclusion is that the moral goals adopted by individuals are not rationally selected but adopted from the repetitive practice of the same actions.

Interpreters of the *NE* (Zeller 1897, p. 182, n. 04; Gauthier and Jolif 1959b, p. 564-565; Cooper 1986, p. 63, n. 82; Allan 1977, p. 73; Sorabji 1980, p. 208-209; Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 107, n. 2; Taylor 2008, p. 208; Moss 2011, p. 206, n. 5) point out that, in modern times, one interpretation in the way sketched above was first proposed and defended by Julius Walter in the book *Die Lehre von der praktischen Vernunft in der griechischen Philosophie* (1874, p. 208-212). Echoes from Walter's interpretation can be heard in the interpretations held by Zeller (1897, p. 186-187)⁸, Burnet (1900, p. 67-68), Achtenberg (2002), Fortenbaugh (2006, p. 107-130), and Moss (2011, p. 204-261; 2012, p. 153-199; 2014, 221-241). Nevertheless, the interpretative approach founded by Walter is regarded with scepticism by several scholars⁹. Besides the expected concern of avoiding the view that the adoption of moral goals is the task of a non-rational virtue, some interpreters point out that a reading in these lines may lead the modern reader to associate Aristotle

⁷ The construal delineated is open to controversies. I discuss the exegetical difficulties involved in such passage in chapter 1.

⁸ According to Allan (1977, p. 73-74), Zeller changes his position after the publication of the third edition of his book, endorsing then the interpretation proposed by Walter.

⁹ As examples, I quote: Gauthier and Jolif (1959, p. 564-565), Allan (1977, p. 73), Sorabji (1980, p. 209), Cooper (1986, p. 62-65), Taylor (2008, p. 208-209), and Lorenz (2009, p. 177-212).

to Hume and to his claim that reason is a slave of the passions and that, in the moral realm, the reason's task is to serve them¹⁰. Such concern is presented by Allan: "in consequence of Zeller's submission to Walter, a false doctrine has, since the beginning of this century, to a great extent invaded the Oxford Schools, and Aristotle, whose ethics is really of a rationalist type, is brought into connexion with Hume" (Allan 1977, p. 74). By his turn, Sorabji expresses the same concern: "the best known case is that of Walter, who insisted that our goals are decided by virtue, and that virtue, so far from being a rational thing, is a state of the faculty of desire, which simply approves certain goals. Thus Aristotle is assimilated to Hume [...]" (Sorabji 1980, p. 209).

Humean or quasi-Humean interpretations (in opposition to anti-Humean or non-Humean readings), this is how Aristotelian scholars commonly refer to interpretations that assume the claim that virtue of character, taken as a good disposition of a non-rational part of the soul, exclusively sets the goals of the moral actions while *phronesis* is responsible for the things towards the goals. Such a kind of opposition is found, for instance, in the foreground in a recent paper written by Moss: *Was Aristotle a Humean? A Partisan Guide to the Debate* (2014, p. 221-241). At the end of 1950s, Gauthier and Jolif pointed out that the construal proposed by Julius Walter approximated Aristotle to Hume (1959b, p. 564-565). In the 1970s, Irwin approached this controversy in his paper *Aristotle on Reason, Desire, and Virtue* (1975, p. 567-578). In the 1980s, Dahl dedicated two chapters of his book *Practical Reason, Aristotle, and Weakness of the Will* to the discussion of the Humean interpretation of Aristotle's claims in ethics (1984, p. 23-34, and p. 74-92). In the same decade, in his book *Aristotle's Philosophy of Action*, Charles warned about the possibility of assuming a Humean interpretation of Aristotle if one endorses an extreme desire-based theory to explain the choice of moral goals (1984, p. 185). More recently, to quote some examples, the reference to a possible Humean reading of Aristotle's ethical claims is found in Tuozzo (1991, p. 193), Smith (1996, p. 56-58), McDowell (1998, p. 31-32), Zingano (2007, p. 145), and Taylor (2008, p. 208). From the outset, it is important to say that, by making use of such labels, I neither intend to commit myself to any of the moral claims made by Hume, nor intend to offer a comparative analysis between Aristotle's and Hume's claims. My purpose is quite modest: to rescue the terms used by the Aristotelian scholars to refer to a specific exegetical and philosophical topic raised by the *NE*¹¹.

¹⁰ Hume's famous phrase which the interpreters usually make reference to is found in *A Treatise of Human Nature*: "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part iii, Section 3).

¹¹ The labels Humean and anti-Humean are not restricted to the discussion of moral motivation in the *NE*, they have also been employed in the contemporary discussion about moral motivation to classify different philosophical positions. In a broad-brush description, we can say that a Humean stance on moral motivation defends that our desires (broadly understood: wants, drives, wishes, impulses, likes, and so on) are what motivates us to act, that is, the desires are the *source* of motivation. By its turn, an anti-Humean approach defends the claim that sometimes

In which terms, however, could one talk about a Humean interpretation of Aristotle's claims? From the start, it is necessary to highlight that what is repeatedly called by the Aristotelian scholars as a Humean interpretation of Aristotle's moral claims accommodates a considerable range of interpretations, contrasting in different ways in regard to how to understand the role played by virtue of character and by *phronesis*.

One *fundamentally* Humean construal is that which defends that virtue of character – taken as a virtue of a non-rational part of the human soul, shaped by a process of habituation linked to pleasures and pains (*NE* 1103a31-1103b25, 1104a20-25, and 1104a33-1104b16) and responsible for emotional responses in moral actions (*NE* 1105b19-1106a13) – is alone responsible for setting the moral goals, while *phronesis*, a virtue of the rational part of the soul (*NE* 1103a6 and 1140b5-6), delimits by deliberation the more efficient means to promote the goals adopted by virtue of character¹². In this construal, the task of selecting moral goals, essential to judge the moral quality of any individual, does not belong to the rational jurisdiction. They are adopted by a non-rational part of the soul shaped by habituation. Furthermore, reason becomes instrumental, for its function is restricted to find efficient means to achieve the goals set by character. Even though a Humean construal formulated in these terms might be extracted from the passages aforementioned, such reading is surrounded by criticisms and suspicion not only by interpreters who endorse a non-Humean construal, but also by those who support a Humean one. The first line of interpretation argues against the Humean construal by saying (i) that virtue of character is *partially* rational, (ii) that *phronesis*, or other rational capacity, is *par excellence* responsible for setting the moral goals, (iii) that deliberation is a procedure that involves, under certain aspect, the choice of moral goals, and/or (iv) that virtue of character must be taken as a motivating force that ensures the desire necessary to carry out reason's purposes¹³. In such a kind of interpretation, the principal aim is to delineate interpretative strategies that ensure that reason will play a role in the choice of moral goals. On the other hand, the second line of interpretation, in spite of maintaining in general lines the main claims of the Humean interpretation, I mean, that virtue responds for the moral goals and *phronesis* for the means, endeavours to (i) defend that habituation involves some kind of non-rational cognition, which allows the individual to assess to some extent which actions must be done,

beliefs can motivate us to act and are that which ultimately ground our motivation. For an overview of the discussion, see Miller 2021, p. 48-58

¹² My delimitation of the fundamentally Humean construal hinges on the formulations proposed by Smith (1996, p. 56-7), Taylor (2008, p. 208), and Moss (2014, p. 221).

¹³ Moss offers a more concise description of the non-Humean strategies, which she prefers to call intellectualist. For her, this kind of strategy is built upon two basic points: "(i) one is to allow that virtue plays a crucial role in giving us our goals, while insisting that it can do so only because it is in part an intellectual state. (ii) The other is to accept that virtue is non-rational, while denying that it literally supplies our goals" (Moss 2011, p. 207, see also 2012, p. 163-164).

(ii) concede to *phronesis* a rational apprehension of the goal (without it, deliberation would go astray), which is furnished by virtue of character, and/or (iii) make *phronesis* develop a *morally relevant* work in the delimitation of means, instead of taking it as a mere capacity to select the more efficient means to attain the desired goals. This line of interpretation strives for preserving the textual evidence (passages from T1 to T4) and does so by making attractive the roles played by virtue and *phronesis* within a Humean reading framework.

Throughout the four chapters of this thesis, I discuss the different interpretative strategies outlined above. My main effort is to avoid a Humean interpretation of Aristotle's claims about the labour division. I argue in favour of alternative interpretations to the passages where Aristotle seems to assign to character the task of providing moral goals. Additionally, I argue that Aristotle gives reason a central place in his ethical system, something incompatible with the Humean claim that a non-rational part of the soul sets the moral goals.

The focus of the first chapter is on the moral psychology developed by Aristotle in the first book of the *NE*. This chapter discusses in detail passages from *NE* I.7 and I.13. The discussion of *NE* I.7 is important because in this chapter Aristotle preliminarily introduces the psychological vocabulary that will be at play in his characterization of the virtues. Besides the preliminary introduction of the psychological vocabulary, in this chapter Aristotle already puts forward his views about which kind of interplay character and reason must hold in a virtuously structured soul. This aspect is very important for the discussion of the labour division. The labour division debate is usually focused on the goal passages, discussed in the chapter 3 of this thesis, and does not take into account passages in which Aristotle is clearly discussing the interaction between character and reason. In virtue of that, my discussion of the moral psychology in *NE* I.7 ultimately aims at establishing a connexion between the conclusions achieved in the *ergon* argument about the interactions between character and reason and the discussion about the labour division. Another important aspect of *NE* I.7 is its connexion with the last chapter of book I. In *NE* I.13, Aristotle spells out his classification of the virtues. This classification is grounded in a division of the soul in non-rational and rational parts. I argue that the moral psychology developed in *NE* I.13 provides more details in regard to the account of soul offered in *NE* I.7. There is, therefore, a continuity between these two chapters regarding the topic of moral psychology. One main claim I hold in the first chapter of this thesis is that virtue of character is a virtue of a non-rational part of the soul, which does not contain any element *in itself* that makes it exercise any rational power, such as reasoning, deliberating or employing concepts. When Aristotle classifies this part of the soul as rational, its rationality must be understood in a very precise way. It is rational *insofar as* it listens to

reason. Its rationality and, consequently, participation in the human *ergon* is possible only when it follows reason. But *in itself* it is completely deprived of any reasoning power.

In the second chapter, the topic of moral development is brought into discussion. One possible way of defending a Humean interpretation of the labour division is to argue that the moral goals are set in childhood through upbringing. As in children reason is still in development, their moral education is carried out through the shaping of the non-rational desiderative and emotional propensities. This shaping guides them towards acting in a certain way. This process ends up consolidating a certain moral disposition. The problem is that the moral disposition of one's life is possibly acquired through a non-rational habituation of character in childhood. But this problem starts only if one concedes that education in childhood sets *once and for all* the moral disposition of individuals as though habituation of character were possible *only* in childhood. In the second chapter, I resist such an approach. I defend that habituation must not be exclusively taken in terms of upbringing in the *NE*. The powers of habituation to shape one's character goes beyond upbringing time. Therefore, upbringing does not settle one's character. I argue that the concept of habituation must not be explained in terms of upbringing. Also, I offer some pieces of evidence showing that Aristotle does not conceive of moral training as reduced to habituation. Of course, this is an important thing, but, when discussing moral training, we must also take into account social contexts and individual circumstances. There are some passages in which Aristotle gives some hints about how to conceive moral training in broader terms, including the occasional contribution of reason in helping someone change his character. The second chapter plays the role of avoiding interpretations of the moral development that contribute to the acceptance of Humean claims about the labour division by defending that the moral goals are set by character in childhood, through upbringing.

In the third chapter, the passages traditionally associated to the discussion of the labour division are critically examined. In my view, these passages, called by Moss goal passages (2012, p. 157), do not provide decisive evidence to the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals. I argue that there are alternative ways of taking them. In the alternative interpretations I defend, some of the goal passages are taken to be arguing that what virtue of character does is to ensure that the non-rational desires under character's responsibility will aim at the correct moral goal, which is given by another capacity. In some other of the goal passages, I argue that the contribution of virtue of character to the performance of virtuous action is of fundamental importance. Activities carried out in conjunction by virtue of character and *phronesis* promote the human *ergon*. Note, however, that virtue of character's responsibility is not to set the moral goals; its role in a virtuously structured soul is to listen to reason. Also in this chapter I bring several pieces of evidence that

demonstrate that Aristotle thinks that in a virtuously structured soul reason has the leading role in regard to actions and guides virtue of character. One of these pieces of evidence is the *ergon* argument. In this argument, Aristotle gives reason the central place in a virtuous life. Reason is what best characterizes human beings. Because of this, it sounds very implausible that Aristotle had assigned to a non-rational desiderative part of the soul, whose ways of reacting to moral demands are understood as character, the important task of providing moral goals. This goes against a basic tenet of Aristotle's ethical theory. I argue that the passages in which Aristotle claims that the relation of character to reason in a virtuously structured soul is to listen to reason must be incorporated in the discussion of the labour division. This inclusion sheds new light on the discussion and reveals that Aristotle does not restrict reason's task only to find means to successfully achieve moral goals.

In the final chapter, I turn my attention to important concepts of the *NE* and discuss certain of their implications to the discussion of the labour division. In a first moment, I discuss the definition of virtue of character. The definition of virtue of character as ἔξις προαιρετική does not demonstrate that virtue of character issues *prohairesis* and that, therefore, it is rational. I argue that the characterization of the virtue of character as ἔξις προαιρετική by Aristotle is intended to show that virtue of character follows the *prohairesis* formulated by a rational capacity. In this chapter, I also defend the view that the concept of *prohairesis* must be understood in terms of general purposes adopted by moral agents. These purposes work as general guides to action and need to be specified according to the morally salient features of the circumstances in each action. The *prohairesis* is conceived of as a kind of moral policy adopted by individuals. In regard to the concept of deliberation, I advance an interpretation that makes it morally relevant. Deliberation must not be reduced to the idea of efficiently delimit which course of action to carry out. If deliberation is understood only in this way, there will be no difference between *phronimos*' and clever's deliberation. In my view, deliberation also involves a correct moral appreciation of how to realize in the circumstances the moral values adopted as worth pursuing. Therefore, a virtuous deliberation demands moral sensitivity from individuals so that they realize how to rightly promote in their actions the moral values they see as worth pursuing. In the final section, I discuss some difficulties related to my main claim in this thesis, that is, that in a virtuous soul reason has the leading role in moral actions by guiding character towards what is morally right.

Chapter 1: Moral Psychology¹⁴

1.1. Some Remarks about Moral Psychology and The Moral Virtues¹⁵

It is almost a truism and a widespread opinion among Aristotelian scholars that *NE* is fairly influenced by Aristotle's claims on moral psychology. Aristotle appeals to them on many occasions and, more importantly, his moral psychology's vocabulary pervades the whole book (for instance, *NE* 1097b24-1098a20, 1102a16-1103a10, 1138b35-1139a17, 1139b12, 1140b25, 1143b16, and 1144a9). It is worth noting that two pivotal argumentative steps taken in the *NE* hinge strongly on Aristotle's moral psychology: (i) the *ergon* argument (*NE* 1097b24-1098a20) and (ii) the division of the soul introduced in *NE* I.13, which grounds the classification of the moral virtues (*NE* 1102a16-1103a10). These passages make plain that Aristotle's claims about moral psychology have a key role to play in his moral treatise. However, although there is agreement on that point, the intricacies surrounding the implications of such claims have long been a controversial matter.

There are three main passages (*NE* I.7, I.13, and VI.2) in which Aristotle expounds with more or less details the psychological underpinnings of the moral virtues. All three passages have their own exegetical issues and I will not account for all of them in this chapter. Here, I turn my attention to the first two, focusing on how the psychological vocabulary emerges in them.

One aspect to be flagged up is that a careful construal of the dispute over the roles played by virtue of character and *phronesis* in the moral actions and, consequently, over the kind of cooperation involved between them requires a detailed characterization of both virtues, a topic contentious in itself. Such a characterization bears a crucial impact on the question whether virtue of character must be understood only as an excellent condition of a non-rational part of the soul, with no rational powers in itself, and whether, even being so, it sets the moral goals.

Since it is in the *NE* that Aristotle develops and advances the tenets of his moral psychology, which, as already said, serves as a ground to his investigation into the moral virtues, I will mainly endeavour to characterize the virtues from the textual support offered by him throughout the *NE*. Passages from other works will be used to clarify obscure or ill-developed points but will not be systematically used to make a comparative analysis with passages from the *NE* under scrutiny. It is important to highlight such an aspect because my construal does not envisage solving problems regarding Aristotle's psychology in general. Thus, I follow Aristotle's

¹⁴ Part of this chapter is published in the paper *The introduction of the moral psychology in the ergon argument* (Oliveira 2020).

¹⁵ For ease of reference, I will use the expression "moral virtues" to make reference to the set of virtues involved in the moral actions. As a result, my use of such an expression encompasses both virtues of character and virtues of thought responsible for promoting virtuous moral actions. To avoid confusion, the Greek expression "ἠθικὴ ἀρετή" will be consistently referred to as "virtue of character" instead of "moral virtue".

methodological recommendation that the psychology should be studied in the *NE* to the extent that it contributes to the investigation in course and to the degree demanded by the investigation:

T1. εἰ δὲ ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, δῆλον ὅτι δεῖ τὸν πολιτικὸν εἰδέναι πως τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸν ὀφθαλμοὺς θεραπεύσοντα καὶ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα [...] θεωρητέον δὴ καὶ τῷ πολιτικῷ περὶ ψυχῆς, θεωρητέον δὲ τούτων χάριν, καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον ἰκανῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὰ ζητούμενα· τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξακριβοῦν ἐργωδέστερον ἴσως ἐστὶ τῶν προκειμένων (*NE* 1102a18-20, 23-26).
If all this is so, clearly the political expert should know, in a way, about soul, just as the person who is going to treat people's eyes should know about the entire eye, too; [...] It is for the political expert too, then, to reflect about the soul, but he should do so for the sake of the things in question, and to the extent that will suffice in relation to what is being looked for; to go into greater detail is perhaps a task too laborious for our present enterprise.

To indicate such an approach, I adopt the expression *moral psychology*. However, so as not to lead the reader astray, I should warn at this moment that, by doing so, I am not endorsing the claim that the psychology present in the *NE* is different from that which is developed in the *DA* and other works where psychological issues are investigated. My point is very modest: I am saying that the psychology developed in the *NE* takes place within an ethical investigation and to the extent that it contributes to such an investigation. This restriction *might* lead to different formulations of claims in comparison to the *DA* and other related works as a result of the argumentative interests at hand but does *not* necessarily lead to incompatible claims. Furthermore, due to its methodological restrictions, *NE's* moral psychology does not go into detail about several issues, which might be tackled by considering other Aristotle's works.

1.2. *NE* I.7: the *ergon* argument and the introduction of the moral psychology in the *NE*

The *ergon* argument is considerably built around Aristotle's moral psychology. The argument is put forward as an attempt to provide a preliminary account of the concept of *eudaimonia*, which constitutes Aristotle's leading investigative interest in *NE* I. From the onset, it is important to highlight that in the ensuing lines I will *not* discuss many of the problems traditionally related to the *ergon* argument¹⁶. My approach aims to figure out the embarrassing characterization of the rational part of the soul provided in *NE* I.7. This point is important for two main reasons: it is a prelude of the classification of virtues in *NE* I.13 and the construal of the passage is decisive to the characterization of virtues of character and of thought.

The *ergon* argument begins by introducing the idea of proper activity of human being (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) (*NE* 1097b24-25). In the sequence, Aristotle illustrates his point by saying that the crafts (*NE* 1097b25-6 and 1097b28-9) and the animal organs (*NE* 1097b30-31) have their

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion about the role of the *ergon argument* in Aristotle's investigation into the concept of *eudaimonia*, see Hobuss 2009a, p. 91-112.

own proper activity. And, in such cases, the good and the doing well (τὰγαθὸν καὶ τὸ εὖ) of these things reside in the excellent performance of their proper activity (NE 1097b27-28). This last argumentative step is developed further in NE 1098a7-12 (see also NE 1106a15-24). Having said that, Aristotle proceeds with the task of finding out what is precisely the proper activity of human beings (NE 1097b33). The investigation proceeds in the following way:

T2. (i) τὸ μὲν γὰρ ζῆν κοινὸν εἶναι φαίνεται καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς, ζητεῖται δὲ τὸ ἴδιον. ἀφοριστέον ἄρα τὴν τε θρεπτικὴν καὶ τὴν αὐξητικὴν ζωὴν. ἐπομένη δὲ αἰσθητικὴ τις ἂν εἴη, φαίνεται δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ κοινὴ καὶ ἵππῳ καὶ βοῖ καὶ παντὶ ζῴῳ. λείπεται δὲ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος: **(ii)** τούτου δὲ τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπιπιθεὺς λόγῳ, τὸ δ' ὡς ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον. διττῶς δὲ καὶ ταύτης λεγομένης τὴν κατ' ἐνέργειαν θετέον· κυριώτερον γὰρ αὕτη δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι. **(iii)** εἰ δ' ἐστὶν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου [...]

(NE 1097b34-1098a8).
(i) For being alive is obviously shared by plants too, and we are looking for what is peculiar to human beings. In that case we must divide off the kind of life that consists in taking in nutriment and growing. Next to consider would be some sort of life of perception, but this too is evidently shared, by horses, oxen, and every other animal. There remains an active/practical life of what possesses reason; **(ii)** and of this, one part has it 'possesses reason' in so far as it is obedient to reason, while the other possesses it in so far as it actually has it, and itself thinks. Since this life, too, is spoken of in two ways, we must posit the life in the sense of activity; for this seems to be the more proper sense. **(iii)** Now if the function of man is an activity of soul based on reason or not without reason [...]

In the whole step T2.i, Aristotle discriminates different *kinds of life* to find out the proper activity of human beings. As life is shared by natural beings in distinct levels¹⁷, his efforts will be concentrated in establishing what kind of life is proper to human beings. With this purpose in mind, he rules out the life of nutrition (θρεπτικὴ ζωὴ) and growth (αὐξητικὴ ζωὴ), which are clearly shared even by plants. In the sequence, he does the same concerning the life of perception (αἰσθητικὴ ζωὴ), which, in spite of not being shared by plants, is shared by animals and, in reason of that, cannot be classified as a proper feature of human beings. After this argumentative move, Aristotle is left with a rational kind of life: an active/practical life of what possesses reason (λείπεται δὲ πρακτικὴ τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος). The conclusion attained is shortly formulated and, moreover, Aristotle's phrasing is quite puzzling. In what follows, I argue that the details of the last sentence of passage T2.i are fleshed out in the passage T2.ii.

1.3. The Greek Adjective “πρακτικὴ” in line 1098a2: a controversy

What is, I think, hardly open to disagreement among the interpreters is that the word “ζωή” is implicit in line 1098a3 in the expression “πρακτικὴ τις”, as well as in line 1098a2 in the

¹⁷ What Aristotle means by “kind of lives” is made clear in some passages from *DA*: “by ‘life’ we mean that which has through itself nourishment, growth, and decay” (*DA* 412a13-5, Shield’s translation) and “but living is spoken of in several ways. And should even one of these belong to something, we say that it is alive: reason, perception, motion and rest with respect to place, and further the motion in relation to nourishment, decay, and growth” (*DA* 413a22-5, Shield’s translation).

expression “αἰσθητική τις”. The word is employed in line 1098a1 and, then, taken for granted in the sequence of the passage¹⁸. The agreement, however, ends here and there are plenty of divergences in the interpretation of the details.

The meaning of the word “πρακτική” in line 1098a3 has been a cause for controversy. If the Greek adjective is roughly transliterated into English, one obtains the word “practical”, a word that is strongly related to the idea of moral actions. This association should not be taken for granted, however. As I intend to show, this word has a broader meaning, which should not be restricted to the idea of moral actions.

In his translation, Rowe (2002) opts to render the passage in the following way “a practical sort of life of what possesses reason”. In his French translation, Tricot (2007) suggests a solution similar to Rowe’s: “une certaine vie pratique de la partie rationnelle de l’âme”. Although the word “practical” is not present in Crisp’s translation (2000), he renders the text in such a way that the kernel of the passage is built around the idea of action: “a life, concerned in some way with action”. Similarly, Irwin (1999) translates “some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason”. The problem of associating the Greek word “πρακτική” with the English words “action” and “practical” (or “pratique” in French) is the unsettling implication that these options bring to the *ergon* argument. If one assumes that at this point Aristotle’s intention is to restrict the human *ergon* to the life of action, i.e., the kind of practical life related to moral life, there will be the difficulty to reconcile this result with the conclusion reached in *NE X.7*, according to which human happiness (εὐδαιμονία) also consists in contemplation. Given this scenario, it becomes clear that the translations quoted end up inconveniently constraining the reading of *NE I.7* and make it clash with the result achieved in *NE X.7*¹⁹.

Even though the Greek word “πρακτική” and its cognates are undeniably linked to the idea of action in a strict sense, I mean, in the sense of moral action (for instance, *NE* 1140b21, 1141b17, 1143b24, 1143b27, 1144a11-12, 1146a8, and 1152a9), I would like to argue in favour of a different meaning to this word in *NE I.7*. I will side with those translators who prefer to translate “πρακτική” as “active” (Burnet 1900, p. 35, Joachim 1951, p. 51, Gauthier and Jolif 1958, p. 15, and 1959a, p. 56 (“active” in French), and Ross 2009, p. 11). For Burnet, Gauthier and Jolif, the

¹⁸ All the translations consulted read the passage in that way: Gauthier and Jolif (1958), Irwin (1999), Crisp (2000), Rowe (2002), Ross revised by Lesley Brown (2009). In the same vein, Stewart’s (1892a p. 99), Burnet’s (1900, p. 35), and Joachim’s (1951, p. 51) comments go.

¹⁹ Lawrence uses the following translation of the passage: “a practical life of the part having reason”, what leads him to the same set of issues as I am advancing. He proposes a very sketchy construal of the passage to address them. According to him, the sense of action involved in the passage is strongly related to the idea of rational choice (προαίρεσις), for not even gods make rational decisions in the sense that human beings do, and, even when humans beings contemplate, it may be done based on a decision (Lawrence 2001, p. 459). In his view, Aristotle singles out a feature proper to human beings and so finds the kind of feature demanded by the *ergon* argument.

word does not rule out the activity involved in contemplation and should be taken in a broad sense which includes θεωρία. The general idea conveyed by that translation is that the part possessing reason must be regularly exercised, so that one may safely say that reason has an active life, in contrast to an inactive life. In such an interpretation, the association of the word “πρακτική” to the notion of moral actions is weakened but is not completely dismissed. An active life of the part possessing reason also involves the exercise of reason in the practical sphere, but the practical rationality is no longer the primary focus of the argument. Trying to keep the translation of “πρακτική” as “action”, Stewart paraphrases the passage in the following way: “a life consisting in the action of the rational part” (1892a, p. 99). The idea behind Stewart’s translation is acutely akin to the one imparted by “active”: the proper activity of human beings consists in the *action* of their reason, in other words, in an *active* life of reason. An additional point to be made is that, in the entry “πρακτικός, ἢ, ὄν”, *Liddell & Scott Greek Lexicon* (9th edn. 1996, p. 1458) lists “active” and also “effective” as possible translations.

One advantage of taking “πρακτική” as “active” is that, by doing so, Aristotle does not commit himself to a specific sort of rational activity at this moment of the *NE*. And that is a good exegetical outcome. Had he argued otherwise, he would be advancing more than the occasion recommends. The inquiry is at the very beginning and Aristotle is still in need of investigating adequately the notion of virtue, something which is done from *NE* I.13 to VI.13, where virtues of character and of thought are examined. Moreover, Aristotle himself points out that the *ergon* argument plays the role of providing a sketchy delimitation of εὐδαιμονία (*NE* 1098a20-23). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that its results are formulated at a general level and that its details will be laid out later, in the sequence of the investigation. Additionally, this translation does not clash with the philosophical conclusion drawn in *NE* X. 6-8, which establishes that the life of contemplation is also an *eudaimon* life.

To dispel the objection that “πρακτική” is *invariably* related *only* to moral actions, let me quote a passage from Aristotle’s *Pol.*:

T3. ἀλλ’ εἰ ταῦτα λέγεται καλῶς καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν εὐπραγίαν θετέον, καὶ κοινῇ πάσης πόλεως ἂν εἴη καὶ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἄριστος βίος ὁ πρακτικός. ἀλλὰ τὸν πρακτικὸν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πρὸς ἑτέρους, καθάπερ οἴονται τινες, οὐδὲ τὰς διανοίας εἶναι μόνας ταύτας πρακτικάς, τὰς τῶν ἀποβαινόντων χάριν γιγνομένης ἐκ τοῦ πράττειν, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον τὰς αὐτοτελεῖς καὶ τὰς αὐτῶν ἕνεκεν θεωρίας καὶ διανοήσεις· ἢ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, ὥστε καὶ πρᾶξις τις (*Pol.* 1325b14-21).

If this is well said, and we should assume that *eudaimonia* is good activity, then the active life is best both collectively for the whole city and also for each individual. But it is not necessary for the active life to be one lived in relation to others, as some believe, nor are those thoughts alone active which we have in order to get results from action; much more active are those contemplations and thoughts that are complete in themselves and for their

own sake. For good action is the end, and therefore a certain kind of action is also the end (Kraut's translation).

In this passage, both the life of actions and the life of contemplation, which is described as “contemplations and thoughts that are complete in themselves and for their own sake”, are openly recognized as “πρακτικοί βίοι”. The passage is very enlightening to understand *NE* I.7. First, it gives the Greek adjective “πρακτικός” the meaning which I have argued for, a meaning which also encompasses θεωρία, and, by this reason, settles the question about whether “πρακτική” in *NE* I.7 must be *necessarily* associated to moral actions. Given the evidence, the answer to this question seems to be clearly negative. Second, Aristotle emphasizes that both contemplation and moral action have as their goals a successful performance (εὐπραξία). By doing so, Aristotle endorses the claim that εὐδαιμονία consists in the excellent *performance* of such activities, a point assumed in outline at the very start of the passage T3 when he says: τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν εὐπραγίαν θετέον. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that what is at stake in *NE*'s line 1098a3 is an attempt to emphasize with the Greek adjective “πρακτική” that the human *ergon* consists in the *exercise* of reason and *not* only in its possession. It is not enough to possess reason, but, in order to be *eudaimon*, it is necessary to make it active through its use. I think that a decisive argument in favour of that point is provided in the step T2.ii.

In step T2.ii, Aristotle claims that the life of the rational part is said in two ways (*NE* 1098a5) – even though he presents only one of them – and then lays down which one he is arguing for (*NE* 1098a6). In my view, what Aristotle is doing is an attempt to emphasize and state clearer what was previously expressed by the use of the adjective “πρακτική”: the life of the rational part, he adds, is said in the sense of *activity* (κατ' ἐνέργειαν). As Aristotle does not say which opposition he had in mind, one of the options is to assume that the opposition intended was between activity (ἐνέργεια) and disposition (ἔξις). Gauthier and Jolif (1959a, p. 57-58), Stewart (1892a, p. 99-100), and Burnet (1900, p. 35) take the passage in that way. Such an approach is supported by a passage taken from the chapter right after the *ergon* argument:

T4. τοῖς μὲν οὖν λέγουσι τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἀρετὴν τινα συνωδός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος· ταύτης γὰρ ἐστὶν ἢ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια. διαφέρει δὲ ἴσως οὐ μικρὸν ἐν κτήσει ἢ χρήσει τὸ ἄριστον ὑπολαμβάνειν, καὶ ἐν ἔξει ἢ ἐνεργείᾳ. τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἔξιν ἐνδέχεται μηδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἀποτελεῖν ὑπάρχουσαν, οἷον τῷ καθεύδοντι ἢ καὶ ἄλλως πῶς ἐξηρηγῶσι, τὴν δ' ἐνέργειαν οὐχ οἷον τε· πράξει γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, καὶ εὖ πράξει. ὥσπερ δ' Ὀλυμπίασιν οὐχ οἱ κάλλιστοι καὶ ἰσχυρότατοι στεφανοῦνται ἀλλ' οἱ ἀγωνιζόμενοι (τούτων γὰρ τινες νικῶσιν), οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ καλῶν κάγαθῶν οἱ πράττοντες ὀρθῶς ἐπήβολοι γίνονται (*NE* 1098b30-1099a7).
Well, our account is in harmony with those who say that happiness is virtue, or some form of virtue; for ‘activity in accordance with virtue’ belongs to virtue. But perhaps it makes no little difference whether we suppose the chief good to be located in the possession of virtue, or in its use, i.e. in a disposition or in a form of activity. For it is possible for the disposition to be present and yet to produce nothing good, as for example in the case of the person who

is asleep, or in some other way rendered inactive, but the same will not hold of the activity: the person will necessarily be doing something, and will do (it) well. Just as at the Olympic Games it is not the finest and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete (for the winners come from among these), so too in life it is the doers that become achievers of fine and good things – and rightly so.

In this passage, Aristotle advances the claim that εὐδαιμονία is not to be found in mere virtuous disposition but in virtuous activity. In Aristotle’s own terms, not in ἔξις but in ἐνέργεια. This passage lends support to the interpretation according to which Aristotle had in mind the opposition between ἔξις and ἐνέργεια when he said that the life of the part having reason is said in two ways. Disposition (ἔξις) is a technical term in the context of *NE*, a concept developed in book II. In a general description, ἔξις is a highly developed disposition that enables its possessor to do something in a certain way. If one endorses this opposition, the underlying idea in the passage will be that, provided that the person intends to achieve *eudaimonia*, he cannot have a virtuous disposition and then not to use it. The acquired disposition needs to be exercised. Another possibility, which also fits the context, is to suppose that the opposition is between ἐνέργεια and δύναμις, as Irwin’s translation suggests (1999). In this case, the point is similar to the previous one, at least in its general lines: provided that an individual intends to have *eudaimonia*, reason cannot be idle, I mean, it cannot be just an available capacity, it must be exercised. Regardless of the option chosen, my main point holds in both scenarios: the expression “κατ’ ἐνέργειαν” plays the role of making explicit what was previously given by the word “πρακτική”²⁰. It emphasizes that the human *ergon* must be exercised to promote the human good, i.e., *eudaimonia*.

1.4. The Two Meanings of “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”

In explaining his use of the Greek expression “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος” in *NE* I.7, Aristotle starts out by putting flesh on the bones of his moral psychology. In *NE* I.7, Aristotle states only briefly what he means by the expression “τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”. The brief remark is fully developed in *NE* I.13 when the classification of virtues is officially spelt out.

The division of the part possessing reason in *NE* I.7 is quite embarrassing. Aristotle divides the part called “λόγον ἔχον” into two. One of them is said to “have reason” insofar as it is

²⁰ One of the possible translations listed by *Liddell & Scott Greek Lexicon* (1996, p. 1458) to the word “πρακτική” is “effective”. Even though I opted to argue in favour of “active” as the appropriate translation, I would not discard the possibility that “effective” also captures certain aspects of what is at stake in the passage. It might be perfectly the case that with “πρακτική” Aristotle also intends to introduce the claim that reason should deliver an efficient performance, I mean, a performance that is effective in attaining its aims, be it either practical or theoretical. The occurrence of “πρακτική” seems to encode this meaning as well. This is a meaning that is at play in the definition of *phronesis* (*NE* 1141b21-22). The employment of “πρακτική” in *phronesis*’ definition is to indicate that *phronesis* performs effectively its task of carrying out what is good for human beings (see Angioni 2011, p. 306, 312-313, and 324-325). I am grateful to Lucas Angioni for calling my attention to this aspect.

obedient to reason and the other insofar as it possesses reason and exercises thought. That division unavoidably reminds the division proposed in *NE* I.13:

T5. τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὅλως ὀρεκτικὸν μετέχει πως, ἢ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πειθαρχικόν· οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν φίλων φαιμέν ἔχειν λόγον, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ τῶν μαθηματικῶν. ὅτι δὲ πείθεται πως ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον, μηνύει καὶ ἡ νοουθέντις καὶ πᾶσα ἐπιτίμησις τε καὶ παράκλησις. εἰ δὲ χρὴ καὶ τοῦτο φάναι λόγον ἔχειν, διττὸν ἔσται καὶ τὸ λόγον ἔχον, τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δ' ὥσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουσικόν τι (*NE* 1102b30-1103a3, highlights are mine).

The appetitive and in general desiring part does participate in it [reason] in a way, i.e. *in so far as it is capable of listening to it and obeying it*: it is the way one is reasonable when one takes account of advice from one's father or loved ones, not when one has an account of things, as for example in mathematics. That the non-rational is in a way persuaded by reason is indicated by our practice of admonishing people, and all the different forms in which we reprimand and encourage them. If one should call this too 'possessing reason', then the aspect of the soul that possesses reason will also be double in nature: *one element of it will have it in the proper sense and in itself, another as something capable of listening as if to one's father* (highlights are mine).

In that chapter, Aristotle identifies the obedient part of the soul with the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part, which is first classified as non-rational²¹ and then, a couple of lines later, as being rational to some extent. A sneaking suspicion that one may well have after comparing passages from *NE* I.7 and *NE* I.13 is the following: is one allowed to identify the desiderative, obedient part in *NE* I.13 with the perceptive one introduced in *NE* I.7? As textual evidence for that, certain passages from *DA* can be quoted, passages in which Aristotle defends that the presence of perception implies the presence of appetite:

T6. καὶ γὰρ αἴσθησιν ἐκάτερον τῶν μερῶν ἔχει καὶ κίνησιν τὴν κατὰ τόπον, εἰ δ' αἴσθησιν, καὶ φαντασίαν καὶ ὄρεξιν· ὅπου μὲν γὰρ αἴσθησις, καὶ λύπη τε καὶ ἡδονή, ὅπου δὲ ταῦτα, ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἐπιθυμία (*DA* 413b21-24).

For each of the parts has perception and motion with respect to place, and if perception, then also imagination and desire; for wherever there is perception, there is also both pain and pleasure; and wherever these are, of necessity there is appetite as well (Shield's translation).

T7. ὑπάρχει δὲ τοῖς μὲν φυτοῖς τὸ θρεπτικὸν μόνον, ἑτέροις δὲ τοῦτό τε καὶ τὸ αἰσθητικόν. εἰ δὲ τὸ αἰσθητικόν, καὶ τὸ ὀρεκτικόν [...] τὰ δὲ ζῶα πάντ' ἔχουσι μίαν γε τῶν αἰσθήσεων, τὴν ἀφήν· ἧ δ' αἴσθησις ὑπάρχει, τούτῳ ἡδονή τε καὶ λύπη καὶ τὸ ἡδύ τε καὶ λυπηρόν, οἷς δὲ ταῦτα, καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία· τοῦ γὰρ ἡδέος ὄρεξις αὕτη (*DA* 414a32-b5).

The nutritive faculty alone belongs to plants; both this and the perceptual faculty belong to others. But if the perceptual faculty, then also the desiderative faculty [...] And all animals have at least one kind of perception, touch. And that to which perception belongs, to this belongs also both pleasure and pain, as well as both the pleasurable and the painful; and to those things to which these belong also belongs appetite, since appetite is a desire for what is pleasurable (Shield's translation).

²¹ In the sequence, I discuss in detail the place held by the appetitive and desiring part in the division of soul.

In these passages, Aristotle defends that the presence of perception implies the presence of appetite, establishing a connexion between these two capacities. Given that textual evidence and, moreover, considering that the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part of the soul can be hardly identified with the nutritive and vegetative part – which is dismissed out of hand as having nothing to do with human virtue²² – and much less with the rational part strictly speaking in the context of the threefold division of the soul initially proposed in *NE* I.7, the reader may well be led to infer that *NE* I.13's obedient part was implicitly introduced as the perceptive part in the function argument²³. If that reading is correct, an important exegetical problem arises. Before saying that the human *ergon* consists of an active life of the part possessing reason, Aristotle flatly rules out the life of nutrition, growth, and *also perception* as candidates to that position. So it might sound as unlikely the inclusion of this part of the soul as taking part in human function on second thought.

Aristotle's argumentative moves in *NE* I.7 led Fortenbaugh to argue that the division proposed in lines 1098a4-5 “runs within the biological faculty of thought” (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 62, see also p. 125, footnote 22). One reason put forward by him to support his view is that emotions involve beliefs (for instance, the belief that there is a danger or that one suffers injustice), and beliefs belong to the biological faculty of thought²⁴. In his view, had Aristotle identified the obedient part, responsible for emotions, with the perceptive soul, it would have been philosophically questionable. Fortenbaugh grounds his position assuming that Aristotle is moving within the framework of his biological psychology in a first moment of the *ergon* argument, what allows reader to assume that the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul corresponds to the biological faculty of

²² On two occasions, the nutritive and vegetative part is said to have no importance to the ethical investigation: “[...] and we should leave the nutritive aspect of the soul to one side, since it appears by nature devoid of any share in human excellence ([...] καὶ τὸ θρεπτικὸν ἐατέον, ἐπειδὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς ἀρετῆς ἄμοιρον πέφυκεν) (*NE* 1102b11-12)” and “of the fourth part of the soul, the nutritive, there is no excellence of a relevant sort; for there is nothing the doing or not doing of which depends on it (τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μορίου τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρετὴ τοιαύτη, τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν)” (*NE* 1144a9-11).

²³ A strategy to assimilate the obedient part of the soul presented in *NE* I.13 with the perceptive soul presented in *NE* I.7 is insinuated by Fortenbaugh and then quickly dismissed: “More than a century ago, Bernays recognized that lines 1103a1-3 are a supplement. His explanation is instructive: earlier in 1.7 1098a4, the obedient element in the soul was attributed to the λόγον ἔχον. Therefore at the end of 1.13, Aristotle's thinks himself constrained to add that this attribution is also permissible. The reference to 1098a4 is important, for here too the passionate part of the soul is brought within the λόγον ἔχον, and here too the inclusion is unexpected, so that as I see it, neither in 1.7 nor in 1.13 is a gloss to be suspected. Rather, Aristotle has written both passages with a definite purpose in mind. He wants to make clear how the bipartite psychology of ethical theory relates to the biological psychology of the *De Anima*. In the early passage, clarification is certainly helpful and perhaps necessary. For Aristotle has used the psychology of the *De Anima* to determine the function of man. This use of the psychology of the *De Anima* could be misleading, so that a listener (or reader) might confuse bipartition with the biological psychology. I.e., he might believe that the divisions of the two psychologies coincide and that the obedient part of the bipartite soul is identical with the biological faculty of sensation. For that reason, Aristotle has added a note, making clear that *the division of bipartition runs within the biological faculty of thought; that the obedient part of the bipartite soul and the biological faculty of sensation are not identical*” (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 61-62, highlights are mine).

²⁴ Passages presented by Fortenbaugh to justify the need of beliefs in the emotions are the followings: *NE* III.6 1115a9, *Rh.* 1382a21–22, 1378a30–33, and 1380b17–18.

thought, within which then a further division is drawn (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 67). In Fortenbaugh's own words, "the obedient part of the bipartite soul is cognitive and therefore has a place within the biological faculty of thought" and "the sphere of moral virtue is cognitive and therefore overlaps the biological faculty of thought" (Fortenbaugh 2006, p. 67).

When it comes to the use of the expression "λόγον ἔχον", there is compelling evidence that Aristotle does not take it to have the same meaning throughout the *NE*. The term has its subtleties, which, in my view, rely in large measure on contextual issues. There are two occurrences of the expression "λόγον ἔχον" that represent a glaring example of a meaning shift. Whereas in *NE* I.13 Aristotle seems to allow that the appetitive and desiderative part of the soul be *somehow* described as "λόγον ἔχον" (*NE* 1103a2-3), adopting clearly a broad meaning to the expression, the same expression is unexpectedly employed in *NE* VI.2 in a narrow sense in which only the properly rational parts are included. The broad meaning disappears in that chapter and the expression "λόγον ἔχον" encodes only the parts of the soul called "ἐπιστημονικόν" and "λογιστικόν". As a result, one observes a meaning shift that invites the interpreter to be careful when comparing passages. Contextual sensitivity is important to grasp what is at play in *NE* I.7.

Back to *NE* I.7. It seems to me that the features assigned to the λόγον-ἔχον parts of the soul in lines 1098a4-5 are valuable clues which shed some light on how the expression "λόγον ἔχον" can be understood. The descriptions might be reasonably taken to be an effort made by Aristotle to discriminate two parts called rational by assigning to each of them features that differentiate one from the other and that apply *exclusively* either for one or for the other but *not* for both jointly. To put it another way, the features ascribed to each part of the λόγον-ἔχον parts have as their primary intention to draw a clear line of delimitation to each of them by means of some *exclusive* features. In this view, what Aristotle does here is to contrast and oppose two ways of being said "λόγον ἔχον". One way to be said "λόγον ἔχον" is as being obedient to reason (ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ). Here Aristotle employs a metaphorical language that will be enriched throughout *NE* I.13. The other way to be said "λόγον ἔχον" is as having reason and exercising thought (ὡς ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον). If one assumes that the last features are *exclusive* to the second way of being said "λόγον ἔχον" (just as the latter feature is proper to the first), it is plausible to take the passage to have the underlying idea that the features that belong to the first way of being said "λόγον ἔχον" should not be ascribed to the second one and also the other way around, a position that receives exegetical support from *NE* I.13, especially when one compares the parallels between that chapter and *NE* I.7. For instance, as Aristotle classifies the desiderative, obedient part of the soul as non-rational (ἄλογος) in *NE* I.13, this may be arguably seen as evidence to deny to it the possibility of being described as "ἔχον [λόγον] καὶ διανοούμενον".

I admit that saying that someone or something has reason (λόγον ἔχον) due to being obedient to reason is perhaps a philosophically unsound way to call something rational. Nonetheless, it is more advisable to take Aristotle at his word, especially because the division proposed by him is only outlined in *NE* I.7 and a lengthy treatment is provided later in *NE* I.13. Despite that, I think it is worth noticing that Aristotle arguably employs in *NE* I.7 a broad sense for the expression “λόγον ἔχον”, which cannot be accommodated within the biological faculty of thought – as Fortenbaugh in some way proposed –, without severe difficulties. It seems that only the second characterization might be appropriately said to resemble the biological faculty of thought or to belong to the biological faculty of thought. The first characterization is rational only in an extended and broad sense and apparently is a characterization proper to Aristotle’s moral psychology. That characterization will appear again later in *NE* I.13 and its details will be spelt out. So, for the moment, I opt to take the passage as it stands in the Aristotelian text and, in addition, to assume that the obedient part does not have reason properly speaking and does not exercise thought because both attributes belong exclusively to the part that is rational in the strict sense.

One last point: when it comes to the identification of the obedient part with the perceptive part of the soul, although this hypothesis may be speculated based on the textual support of certain passages from *DA*, Aristotle, to the best of my knowledge, never claimed that *directly* in the *NE*. What we know with certainty is that the non-rational part whose good condition constitutes virtue of character is identified with the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part of the soul, which is influenced by reason. As far as the textual evidence in the *NE* is concerned, we need not take a step further. There is clear textual evidence that reason exerts some influence on the non-rational part responsible for desires; however, it does not need to lead us to associate this part of the soul with the perceptive one.

In step T2.iii, Aristotle proceeds by saying that the human *ergon* is an activity based on reason or not without reason (ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου). In my view, the Greek word “ἢ” can be taken to be proposing an adjustment to the expression “ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον” for not capturing in precise terms the results previously achieved. As I have shown, there is one part of the λόγον-ἔχον part that does not possess reason in the strict sense but that, even so, maintains certain interaction with reason. If my reading is accepted, Aristotle cannot commit himself to the claim that the human *ergon* is *exclusively* an activity of reason because the previous results achieved compel him to state that the human *ergon* is an activity that cannot be performed without reason. This new formulation is in tune with the posterior inclusion of the exercise of virtues of character in *NE* I.13

among the activities that promote *eudaimonia*. These virtues are, at least partially, non-rational²⁵. The second part of the formulation (ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου) makes room for the inclusion of the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part of the soul in the human *ergon*, posing a challenge to Fortenbaugh's interpretation. If the twofold λόγον-ἔχον division had been drawn within the rational part strictly speaking, Aristotle would not have had to add the expression “ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου”. The formulation “ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον” would have been a perfect fit for summing up his results.

The examined passage in *NE* I.7 does not have the purpose of setting out the details of Aristotle's moral psychology. To put the point differently, the moral psychology is not within its investigative focus. The moral psychology plays a role in *NE* I.7 within the limits imposed by the *ergon* argument. So the construal of the passage is restrained by some caveats. The details of the moral psychology are fleshed out in *NE* I.13, which is definitely a chapter that should take pride of place in any attempt of fully understanding Aristotle's moral psychology.

1.5. The Labour Division and the *Ergon* Argument

Before going further in the exposition of the moral psychology in *NE* I, I would like to say a couple of words about how the *ergon* argument provides an important ground to think the labour division between virtue of character and *phronesis*. Traditionally, the *ergon* argument is not regarded as playing an important role in the attempt of understanding the labour division. At first glance, it does not seem to provide a direct textual evidence for any side of the exegetical dispute; however, I think that it offers a philosophical framework about Aristotle's conception of human beings that has to be taken into account in the discussion of the labour division.

In the *ergon* argument, what is established as the proper feature of human beings is the exercise of the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul. Aristotle's claim is general enough to include the exercise both of practical and theoretical rationality. But, regardless of which rationality is at stake, Aristotle makes an option for setting reason as being what is proper to human beings and what characterizes them better. A good and *eudaimon* life is the one that displays an excellent performance of reason. In other words, an *eudaimon* life is the one lived in the interest of and for the sake of reason.

As I have already shown, the obedient part of the soul introduced in *NE* I.7 as one of the λόγον-ἔχον parts is the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part found in *NE* I.13. This obedient part corresponds to the part whose excellent exercise constitutes virtue of character. What must be stressed is that the relevant feature assigned to virtue of character at this moment of Aristotle's

²⁵ I discuss below the characterization of virtue of character and why some scholars defend that this virtue is partially rational.

argumentation is the fact of being obedient to reason (ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ) (*NE* 1098a4), a feature repeated on different occasions (*NE* 1102b29-1103a3, 1119b13-18, see also 1095a10, 1104b22-24, 1115b10-13, 1120a23-26, 1125b33-1126a1, and 1180a10-12). It is worth noticing that Aristotle characterizes virtue of character as fundamentally being under the guidance of reason. So he conceives of reason as guiding virtue of character and not the other way around. In the context of the *ergon* argument, Aristotle is not directly addressing problems related to the labour division nor does he work with the vocabulary of means and goals, characteristic of the discussion of the labour division. In spite of that, the passage advances a view that is apparently incompatible and seems even to clash with the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals.

In a later moment of the *NE*, Aristotle states:

T8. καὶ βούλεται δὴ ἑαυτῷ τὰγαθὰ καὶ τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πράττει (τοῦ γὰρ ἀγαθοῦ τὰγαθὸν διαπονεῖν) καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἔνεκα (τοῦ γὰρ διανοητικοῦ χάριν, ὅπερ ἕκαστος εἶναι δοκεῖ) (*NE* 1166a14-17).

And he certainly wishes for what is good for himself, and what appears good, and he does it (for it is a mark of a good person to work hard at what is good), and for his own sake (for he does it for the sake of the thinking element of himself, which is what each of us is thought to be).

In this passage, Aristotle remarks once again the fact that the thinking element is what better characterizes the human beings. This is one more piece of evidence to the fact that Aristotle has a view about human beings and its proper way of living that gives reason the most privileged place, making reason that for the sake of which a virtuous life must be conducted. Giving that Aristotle grants a privileged position to reason, it becomes philosophically challenging to maintain the claim that a non-rational part of the soul sets the goals.

A passage taken from *Pol.* formulates in a clearer way the subordination of the non-rational desires to reason:

T9. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴ τοῦ σώματος ἄρχει δεσποτικὴν ἀρχήν, ὁ δὲ νοῦς τῆς ὀρέξεως πολιτικὴν ἢ βασιλικήν· ἐν οἷς φανερόν ἐστιν 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, τὸ δ' ἐξ ἴσου ἢ ἀνάπαλιν βλαβερόν πᾶσιν (*Pol.* 1254b4-9).

For the soul rules the body with the rule of a master, whereas understanding rules desire with the rule of a statesman or with the rule of a king. In these cases it is evident that it is natural and beneficial for the body to be ruled by the soul, and for the affective part to be ruled by understanding (the part that has reason), and that it would be harmful to everything if the reverse held, or if these elements were equal.

Here Aristotle leaves no doubt that he considers that the passionate part has to follow reason. The passage is in harmony with the view defended in some passages of the *NE* according to which the non-rational part of the soul needs to be obedient to reason. The unavoidable conclusion

is that the Humean interpretative proposal about the labour division apparently does not take into account a crucial aspect of the view that Aristotle has about human beings: their fundamental trait and its proper activity. In an ethical system that grants to reason a position of central importance, it would be completely counter-intuitive to deny to it the role of setting moral goals and assigning this task to a non-rational part of the soul.

1.6. *NE* I.13 and the Classification of Virtues: the alternative interpretation

In *NE* I.13, Aristotle launches an investigation into virtues that will take up the next five books. In these books, he discusses thoroughly virtues of character and of thought. The investigative journey is announced as an attempt to understand better the notion of *eudaimonia*, a notion to which two concepts are tightly associated: soul (ψυχή) and virtue (ἀρετή). *Eudaimonia* was said to be an “activity of *soul* based on *virtue*” (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ’ ἀρετήν) (*NE* 1098a16-17). For this reason, the two notions gain prominence in *NE* I.13.

Before proceeding further, I would like to highlight that it is hardly open to any objection that virtue of character and *phronesis* are tightly interwoven. Aristotle even argues in *NE* VI.13 that it is not possible to have virtue of character without *phronesis* and the other way around also holds (*NE* 1144b16-17, 31-32, see also 1178a16-17). These virtues maintain a relation of co-dependency which plainly makes difficult the task of disentangling the roles played by each of them in moral actions. Despite this challenging philosophical framework, which sometimes invites the reader to cross the line that divides both virtues and, in consequence, their duties, I will make an analytical effort of expounding the features of both virtues and the tasks that are assigned by Aristotle to each of them in the moral actions. It is fundamental to stress that the division of virtues is drawn with the purpose of separating the concepts advanced by Aristotle to explain the moral phenomena. The moral phenomena are complex and what is conceptually distinguishable in them occurs together in the world in such a way that it is not an easy task to disentangle the several elements involved. Thus, the conceptual distinction of the virtues do not flirt with the idea that virtue of character and *phronesis* are developed and established independently from one another. Moral development involves a progressive enhancement of moral qualities and abilities that are firmly tied²⁶.

Over the years, some doubts have been raised against the characterization of virtue of character as exclusively a good disposition of a non-rational part of the soul, which may be taken as the standard reading. Even though the arguments against this reading do not seem to have completely overthrown it, the challenges posed by the alternative reading should be met. The

²⁶ For an approach that assumes a similar perspective, see Vasiliou 1996, p. 780.

concerns voiced by the alternative reading offer a good opportunity to re-examine and discuss the details of Aristotle's classification of the virtues.

Broadly speaking, the alternative reading holds that virtue of character is *not* to be conceived of as consisting *exclusively* in an excellent condition of a certain non-rational part of the soul. Irwin severely classifies the standard view as being “at least misleading” (Irwin 1975, p. 576). According to him, Aristotle must have said that virtue of character involve both parts of the soul, non-rational and rational, while virtues of thought only the latter (Irwin 1975, p. 576). Adopting a similar approach, Engberg-Pedersen states: “*phronesis* is always and only a part of moral virtue” (1983, p. 169). He takes *phronesis* to be the cognitive element in the genuine virtue²⁷ (κυρία ἀρετή) introduced in *NE* VI.13 (Engberg-Pedersen 1983, p. 164-165). More recently, Lorenz has come up with compelling arguments supporting the alternative reading. His main claim is that virtue of character represents *not only* an excellent condition of a non-rational part of the soul *but also* an excellent condition of, at least, the rational part of the soul called *phronesis*²⁸. One persuasive argument advanced by Lorenz is that virtue of character is classified as a ἔξις προαιρετική²⁹ (*NE* 1106b36 and 1139a22-3) (Lorenz 2009, p. 196). In another passage, Aristotle reinforces this characterization by saying that “virtues are kinds of decision (προαιρέσεις τινές) or not without decision (οὐκ ἄνευ προαιρέσεως)” (*NE* 1106a3-4). Lorenz argues that the philosophical implication of such characterization is that virtue of character must be properly taken to be a state that enables someone to make decisions (Lorenz 2009, p. 196). Decisions demand deliberation (*NE* 1113a2-7), a rational activity (*NE* 1139a12-15). So, if one concedes the point, it is also necessary to concede that virtue of character is at least partly an excellent condition of a rational part of the soul. Lorenz

²⁷ “Genuine virtue” is the translation used by Engberg-Pedersen to the Greek expression “κυρία ἀρετή”.

²⁸ That claim is propounded in many passages: “Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* conceives of the virtues of character as rational states, states partly constituted by a well-informed, thoughtful quickness to grasp suitable reasons for acting in certain ways if and when such reasons arise” (Lorenz 2009, p. 178). “He [Aristotle] has strong reasons for conceiving of the character-virtues as rational states” (Lorenz 2009, p. 179). “There is good reason to think that it is specifically in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that Aristotle conceives of the virtues of character as rational states, departing from a rather different conception with which he operates in the *Eudemian Ethics*” (Lorenz 2009, p. 180). “Virtue of character is in part constituted by a certain good state of reason strictly speaking, so that it turns out that virtues of character according to Aristotle’s conception of it, straddles the divide between reason and the obedient part of the soul” (Lorenz 2009, p. 193). “I have presented reasons for thinking that Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, including *NE* 6, does conceive of virtue of character in this way, as being partly constituted by *phronesis*. On this conception, virtue of character includes as a constituent a state that ensures that the virtuous person properly identifies and implements suitable ways of promoting his or her goals” (Lorenz 2009, p. 200). “This combination of claims strongly suggests that he thinks virtue of character includes as a constituent *phronesis*, or at any rate the aspect of it that is required for ensuring correctness of decision” (Lorenz 2009, p. 206). “Aristotle commits himself to the view that virtue of character includes *phronesis* as a constituent and is therefore in part a rational state, i.e. a state of reason strictly speaking” (Lorenz 2009, p. 207). “When Aristotle says that the virtues of character are states ‘with correct reason’, or simply that they are states or virtues ‘with reason’, he is properly understood as claiming that the virtues of character are states that are constituted, in part, by a certain correct state of reason, namely by correct reason about what is good for humans” (Lorenz 2009, p. 211).

²⁹ The translation of that expression is very controversial and has important philosophical implications. By now, I keep it untranslated.

comes up with some philological arguments to ground his position, supported both by Greek grammar and by Aristotle's usage. One of the philological arguments is that Greek adjectives with an ending in *-ικός* or *-τικός* and derived from verbs generally indicate that someone or something is able or suited to do something. The lesson is taken from Blass and Kühner's Greek grammar (1892, p. 287). Furthermore, the grammar lesson can be easily found in Aristotle's usage in the *NE*. For instance, knowledge is described as a *ἔξις ἀποδεικτική* (*NE* 1139b31-32) and is understood as a state that enables someone to provide demonstrations. In the same way, the exercise of craft is presented as a *ἔξις ποιητική* (*NE* 1140a20-21) and *phronesis* as a *ἔξις πρακτική* (*NE* 1140b4-6, 20-21). The first is a state that ensures that whoever has it will be able to exercise the craft in question; the second, a state that enables its possessor to act informed by reason in relation to what concerns the human goods (Lorenz 2009, p. 196-197). Another argument raised by Lorenz is that at the end of *NE* VI Aristotle holds that virtue of character is a virtue *μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου* (*NE* 1144b27). When Aristotle characterizes scientific knowledge (*NE* 1140b33), craft (*NE* 1140a6-8), and *phronesis* (*NE* 1140b20-1), all of them are said to be states *μετὰ λόγου* and, according to Lorenz, this means that "these are states that crucially involve being ready to grasp (and provide) suitable reasons or explanations with regard to some given domain" (Lorenz 2009, p. 208). To perform such activities, it is necessary to exercise thought and be rational to some extent. So, if Lorenz's construal is correct, one would unquestionably have to assign to virtue of character a share in reason in the sense of exercising itself a rational activity. Furthermore, Lorenz adds that affirming that some power or capacity is *μετὰ λόγου* instead of saying that it is *ἄλογος* is Aristotle's standard way of saying that the power or capacity is rational (Lorenz 2009, p. 208). In favour of Lorenz's position, one may also consider the passages where Aristotle holds that virtue of character and *phronesis* depend on each other (*NE* 1144a36-b1, 1144b16-17, 1144b31-32, and 1178a16-19) and, therefore, that virtue of character does not arise without the presence of *phronesis*³⁰.

The arguments in favour of the alternative reading are exegetically compelling. On a preliminary approach, they practically win over the reader. However, in spite of their interpretative qualities, I will stick in large measure to the traditional interpretation. When it comes to my argumentative strategy, it will be gradually developed in this thesis. This chapter is just one part of a longer story. At this moment, the discussion will be focused on the classification of the virtues expounded in *NE* I.13. In the next chapters, I examine other passages in which the alternative

³⁰ Although McDowell *does not* support *explicitly* such approach and does not even proceed with his argumentation on the same textual basis as Lorenz, he is apparently prone to endorse the main claim in very general lines: "the harmony of intellect and motivation *in* a virtue of character, strictly so called, is more intimate than that. Practical wisdom is the properly moulded state of the motivational propensities, in a reflectively adjusted form; the sense in which it is a state of the intellect does not interfere *with its also being a state of the desiderative element*" (McDowell 1999, p. 121, highlights are mine).

reading is grounded. Some of the passages quoted by Lorenz not only deal with the classification of moral virtues but are also of fundamental importance to establish an appropriate account of the relations between virtue of character and *phronesis*. As examples of this sort of passage, I can quote the characterization of virtue of character as a ἔξις προαιρετική in *NE* 1106b36, as well as its characterization as μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου in *NE* 1144b27. These passages will be minutely examined within their respective argumentative contexts later.

1.7. The Inquiry into the Virtues in *NE* I.13: methodological remarks

NE I.13 starts out by recapitulating the conclusion of the *ergon* argument. Its conclusion was that *eudaimonia* consists in an activity of the soul based on virtue, where activity of the soul means more properly an activity of the part of the soul that has reason or involves reason. In the sequence, Aristotle points out that we will get a better grasp of what *eudaimonia* is by investigating virtue (*NE* 1102a6-7). The investigation into virtues makes part of an attempt to spell out what was formulated in outline in the conclusion of the *ergon* argument (*NE* 1098a20-21). In *NE* I.13, Aristotle takes one step further in his ethical investigation, leaving behind for a long while the inquiry into *eudaimonia* and drawing the reader's attention to a new front of investigation.

At the beginning of the chapter, Aristotle spends some lines making a few remarks in which he highlights that politicians above all occupy themselves with virtue and *eudaimonia*, for politics' goal is to make citizens be good and abide by the law (*NE* 1102a9-10). In the sequence, Aristotle observes that, if the inquiry is under the political branch, it is in accordance with what was assumed at *NE*'s outset (*NE* 1102a12-13). As *eudaimonia* was delimited as an activity of the soul based on virtue, it is essential to study to some extent the relevant aspects of human psychology to get a better grasp of *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1102a18-21). As far as *NE* I.13 is concerned, an important thing that cannot pass unnoticed is how the topic of human soul is gingerly introduced by Aristotle. Within a few lines, he clearly states that, from a political standpoint, which is the *NE*'s approach, safeguarding the due caveats (*NE* 1094b10-11 and 1102a12-13), the matter is not supposed to have an in-depth treatment:

T10. εἰ δὲ ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, δῆλον ὅτι δεῖ τὸν πολιτικὸν εἰδέναι πως τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς (*NE* 1102a18-19).

But if all this is so, clearly the politician should know, in a way, about soul.

T11. θεωρητέον δὴ καὶ τῷ πολιτικῷ περὶ ψυχῆς, θεωρητέον δὲ τούτων χάριν, καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον ἰκανῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὰ ζητούμενα· τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξακριβοῦν ἐργωδέστερον ἴσως ἐστὶ τῶν προκειμένων (*NE* 1102a23-25).

It is for the politician too, then, to study the soul, but he should do so for the sake of the things in question, and to the extent that will suffice in relation to what is being looked for; to go into greater detail is perhaps a task too laborious for our present purposes.

The passage T10 makes clear that the inquiry into the human soul expounded in the *NE* has some important constraints. Aristotle does not simply affirm that the politician must know (εἰδέναι) the things regarding the soul – what could amount to detailed knowledge about that – but he carefully says that the politician must know *somehow* (εἰδέναι πως) the things regarding the soul. This remark introduces a caveat to the investigation, according to which the investigation into the human soul will be carried out with certain restrictions. However, what kind of constraints is at stake here? What criterion is used to restrict the investigation? What exactly did Aristotle have in mind with the addition of the Greek adverb “πως”? The answer to these questions is given in the passage T11: what constrains the study of the human soul is the *NE*'s investigative goal. I explain. Unlike the *DA*, a treatise deliberately designed to be an in-depth inquiry into the concept of soul, the *NE* is a treatise concerned with ethical issues that, given their nature and range of interests, require the use of certain notions coined by Aristotle in his psychology. For that reason, the study of the soul in the *NE* is done up to the point that it contributes to shedding light on the ethical discussion. For instance, it is practically impossible to explain the *akrasia* and *enkrateia* without saying a single word about the soul's capacities involved. The whole treatment of both phenomena is undeniably pervaded by the regular use of a psychological vocabulary (for instance, *NE* 1145b13-14, 20, 29-31, 1146a2-3, 10, 13, 1147a15, 19, 33-34, 1147b2-3, 5, 8, 16-17, and 1149a29-b2). The conceptual apparatus of Aristotle's moral psychological sets the stage for the inquiry into the virtues and actions and, for that reason, it deserves a close look.

1.8. The Vocabulary of Parts of the Soul: “τό μέρος” and “τό μέρος”

After the methodological remarks, Aristotle finally begins the investigation into the human soul with the following claim:

T12. τὸ μὲν ἄλογον αὐτῆς εἶναι, τὸ δὲ λόγον ἔχον (*NE* 1102a27-28).
One part of the soul is non-rational, while another part possesses reason.

Short though the passage is, it gives rise to a set of questions. The chief question is related to the mereological vocabulary employed. Is Aristotle indeed taking for granted that the soul has genuine parts? If so, what is the criterion employed to divide and catalogue its different parts? How do these parts form together one single soul? Is the talk about parts really important to the ethical investigation? If so, to what extent?

Considering the passage T12 in the cold light of day, one realizes that, even though the concerns listed surround the passage, neither is the word “τό μόριον” nor “τό μέρος” present in it³¹. However, I do not think it does constitute a serious objection against taking the passage to be suggesting the idea of parts. Two main arguments may be displayed in favour of that position. The first is that Aristotle regularly employs the words “τό μόριον” and “τό μέρος” in contexts in the *NE* where a discussion about the soul is manifestly at stake (*NE* 1102b4, 1139a4, 1139a9, 1139a15, 1139b12, 1140b25, 1143b16, 1144a9, and 1145a7). The second is that, after the passage quoted, Aristotle himself offers a short talk about parts. This passage deserves to be cited at length. It throws some light on the discussion about the parts of the soul:

T13. ταῦτα δὲ πότερον διώρισται καθάπερ τὰ τοῦ σώματος μόρια καὶ πᾶν τὸ μεριστόν, ἢ τῷ λόγῳ δύο ἐστὶν ἀχώριστα πεφυκῶτα καθάπερ ἐν τῇ περιφερείᾳ τὸ κυρτὸν καὶ τὸ κοῦλον, οὐθὲν διαφέρει πρὸς τὸ παρόν (*NE* 1102a28-32).

It makes no difference for present purposes whether these are delimited like the parts of the body, and like everything that is divisible into parts, or whether they are two things in account but by nature inseparable, like the convex and the concave in the case of a curved surface.

Despite its brevity, the passage provides guidelines for the treatment of some issues related to my investigative agenda. It is rather striking that Aristotle himself does not attach much importance to a fine-grained approach to the mereological vocabulary present in *NE* I.13. Rather, he is very emphatic on saying that discussing how the parts of the soul must be conceived makes no difference for the present purposes (οὐθὲν διαφέρει πρὸς τὸ παρόν). Similarly, when it comes to establishing still in *NE* I.13 an accurate distinction between reason and that which in the soul runs contrary to reason, Aristotle flatly claims: “how it is different, though, is not important” (πῶς δ’ ἕτερον, οὐδὲν διαφέρει) (*NE* 1102b25). In reason of this overall framework, interpreters are usually prone to assume that Aristotle does not take the division of the soul to be seriously implying the existence of genuine parts. In his comments on the *NE*, Burnet categorically affirms that “Aristotle himself did not believe in ‘parts of the soul’ at all: Plato did [...]” (Burnet 1900, p. 58). Gauthier and Jolif also claim that, unlike Plato, Aristotle is not concerned with the possibility of assigning different parts of the soul to different parts of the body. According to them, the criterion guiding Aristotle is the distinction of the parts of the soul by their powers, which set them apart from each

³¹ The word “part” is present in several translations of the passage to modern languages: “la conclusion essentielle qui résume tout ce que nous avons besoin de savoir, c’est qu’on peut distinguer dans l’âme deux parties: l’une sans règle, l’autre qui a une règle” (Gauthier and Jolif, 1958); “we have said, for instance, that one [part] of the soul is non-rational, while one has reason” (Irwin, 1999); “no caso, uma parte sua é não-racional; a outra, dotada de razão” (Zingano, 2008); “c’est ainsi que nous admetons qu’il y a dans l’âme la partie irrationnelle et la partie rationnelle” (Tricot, 2007); “for example, that one part of the soul is non-rational whereas another part has reason” (Reeve, 2014).

other³² (Gauthier and Jolif 1959a, p. 94). Such a deflationary interpretation, not committed to a division of the soul in genuine parts, is also held by Lorenz. He argues that the only thing that the division proposed requires is that the parts of the soul may be distinguished in account or definition³³ (Lorenz 2006, p. 187). In the *DA*, Aristotle himself expresses reservations against talking about parts of the soul (*DA* 411b5-14 and 432a22-b7). On other occasions, he makes use of the words “capacity” and “parts” interchangeably to refer to the main capacities of the soul presented in the *DA* (*DA* 413a32-b8, 413b24-29, and 429a10-15). However, taking parts as the same as capacities *tout court* is a highly controversial exegesis of the *DA*³⁴. Back to the *NE*, it is worth noticing that Aristotle does not dwell on this discussion and, when it arises, he dismisses it out of hand. In the sequence of *NE* I.13, what one sees is Aristotle describing the so-called parts of the soul according to the powers that they have and the activities for which they are responsible. That is the approach adopted by him in the *NE* regarding the parts of the soul. In what follows, I presuppose such a deflationary approach³⁵.

1.9. The Two Non-rational Parts of the Soul

From line 1102a32 to line 1102b12, Aristotle provides the first subdivision within the non-rational part of the soul. He calls one of the subdivided parts φυτικόν (*NE* 1102a32-33) and θρεπτικόν (*NE* 1102b11, see also 1098a1). This part is identified as responsible for the nutrition and growth (λέγω δὲ τὸ αἴτιον τοῦ τρέφεσθαι καὶ αὔξεσθαι) (*NE* 1102a33). These two capacities are shared by all beings that take in nourishment (*NE* 1102a33-b1). As a result, the virtue of this capacity is not distinctively human (οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνη) (*NE* 1102b2-3) and thus it plays no part in human virtue (τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς ἀρετῆς ἄμοιρον πέφυκεν) (*NE* 1102b12). To be a distinctively human capacity, the capacity is required to be in interaction with reason, something that in this case

³² Gauthier and Jolif in their own words: “la question sera reprise dans le traité *DA* II. 2 413b14, III.4 429a10-12, et résolue, III. 9 432a19-b7, dans le sens qu’Aristote laisse dès maintenant prévoir: il ne faut pas distinguer dans l’âme, comme le faisait Platon, des parties qui occuperaient chacune un lieu séparé (l’intellect la tête, l’irascible la poitrine et le concupiscible le ventre), *mais des puissances ou des facultés* qui ne se distinguent pas par le lieu qu’elles occupent, mais par leur définition, c’est-à-dire par leur essence” (Gauthier and Jolif 1959a, p. 94, emphasis is mine).

³³ Lorenz’s position: “one thing this makes sufficiently clear is that Aristotle’s talk of the parts of the soul, in his ethical and political writings, is not meant to indicate a commitment to the view that the items in question have the status of genuine parts, or to the view that the soul really is a composite object. What such talk requires is only that the items in question are distinguishable in account or definition” (Lorenz 2006, p. 187).

³⁴ Setting aside the *NE* for a moment, it is important to underscore that the issue about how to divide the soul is not settled even within the *DA*’s interpretations. Barnes (1971-2, p. 105), Sorabji (1974, p. 64), and Polansky (2007, p. 8) display some tendency to see the parts of the soul as being equivalent to its different capacities. A compelling and quite comprehensive argumentation against such a view was carried out by Corcilius and Gregoric (2010, p. 81-119). They defend that part and capacity are different things and that Aristotle proposed certain criteria to distinguish them.

³⁵ In my view, Aristotle gives the clearest formulation of this approach to the division of the soul in the *EE* when he states: “it makes no difference if the soul is or is not divisible into parts; it still has different capacities” (διαφέρει δ’ οὐδὲν οὐτ’ εἰ μεριστὴ ἢ ψυχὴ οὐτ’ εἰ ἀμερῆς, ἔχει μέντοι δυνάμεις διαφορούς) (*EE* 1219b32-33).

amounts to having reason in itself or involving reason. The *ergon* argument made reasonably clear this point by establishing that what is peculiar to human beings is the life of what possesses reason (broadly and strictly speaking), in whose exercise *eudaimonia* consists. This philosophical background allows Aristotle here to quickly dismiss the part called φυτικός or θεραπευτικός as taking part in human virtue. The same justification to exclude this part is formulated in other terms in *NE* VI.12. In that passage, Aristotle argues that acting or not acting (πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν) in the way relevant to *eudaimonia* is not within its attributions. This part of the soul does not give any contribution to human virtue and, for that reason, cannot take part in it (*NE* 1144a10-11). As a result, such a non-rational part of the soul has no significant contribution to the purposes of the moral investigation. However, when it comes to the other non-rational part of the soul, the situation is substantially different. Before saying any word about it, let me quote the passage in which that part is introduced:

T14. (i) ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογος εἶναι, μετέχουσα μέντοι πῆ λόγου. τοῦ γὰρ ἐγκρατοῦς καὶ ἀκρατοῦς τὸν λόγον καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ λόγον ἔχον ἐπαινοῦμεν ὀρθῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ· **(ii)** φαίνεται δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸν λόγον πεφυκός, ὃ μάχεται καὶ ἀντιτείνει τῷ λόγῳ. ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ καθάπερ τὰ παραλελυμένα τοῦ σώματος μόρια εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ προαιρουμένων κινήσει τὸναντίον εἰς τὰ ἄριστερὰ παραφέρεται, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς οὕτως· ἐπὶ τὰναντία γὰρ αἱ ὀρμαὶ τῶν ἀκρατῶν. ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς σώμασι μὲν ὀρῶμεν τὸ παραφερόμενον, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐχ ὀρῶμεν. ἴσως δ' οὐδὲν ἦττον καὶ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ νομιστέον εἶναι τι παρὰ τὸν λόγον, ἐναντιούμενον τούτῳ καὶ ἀντιβαῖνον. πῶς δ' ἕτερον, οὐδὲν διαφέρει. **(iii)** λόγου δὲ καὶ τοῦτο φαίνεται μετέχειν, ὥσπερ εἶπομεν· πειθαρχεῖ γοῦν τῷ λόγῳ τὸ τοῦ ἐγκρατοῦς—ἔτι δ' ἴσως εὐηκοώτερόν ἐστι τὸ τοῦ σώφρονος καὶ ἀνδρείου· πάντα γὰρ ὁμοφωνεῖ τῷ λόγῳ (*NE* 1102b13-28).

(i) But another kind of soul also seems to be non-rational, although participating in a way in reason. Take the enkratic and the akratic: we praise their reason, and the aspect of their soul that possesses reason; it exhorts correctly in the direction of what is best, **(ii)** but there appears to be something else besides reason that is naturally in them, which fights against reason and resists it. For exactly as with paralysed limbs, which when their owners decide to move them to the right take off in the wrong direction, moving to the left, so it is in the case of the soul: the impulses of the akratics are contrary to each other. The difference is that in the case of the body we actually see the part that is moving wrongly, which we do not in the case of the soul. But perhaps we should not be any less inclined to think that in the soul too there is something besides reason, opposing and going against it. How it is different is of no importance. **(iii)** But this part too seems to participate in reason, as we have said: at any rate, in the enkratic it is obedient to reason – and in the temperate and courageous person it is presumably still readier to listen; for in him it always chimes with reason.

One of the most conspicuous features of the passage – and at the same time, I should add, the most frustrating – is the metaphorical language employed by Aristotle. Rather than explain the struggle among the opposing impulses in the soul by employing an appropriate philosophical and psychological vocabulary, Aristotle opts to invoke a prosaic situation to illustrate the conflict. But, regardless of that, he ends up giving some hints about the complex web of interactions among the parts of the soul. It is worth noticing that the use of metaphors to refer to the relations held

among the different parts of the soul is not restricted to this passage. Still in *NE* I.13, Aristotle proposes another image to describe the relation of obedience that reason has with one of the non-rational parts of the soul (*NE* 1102b31-33), a relation that is also described in metaphorical terms in *NE* III.12 (1109b13-15). The same way of speaking is present when he endeavours to explain why θύμος is more prone to listen to reason than ἐπιθυμία (*NE* 1149a25-32). Additionally, we have already seen a metaphor at work in *NE* I.7. This widespread use of metaphors gives us a reason for thinking that it is not completely unreasonable to presume that the metaphors must be carefully taken, for they were designed to advance certain philosophical positions.

1.10. Does reason have a leading role in moral actions?

Besides the existence of the vegetative soul, which partakes in no way in human virtue, Aristotle now recognizes in T14.i the existence of another non-rational part of the soul. In a first moment, he does not name such a part and prefers to present it by describing certain of its features. The first feature announced is that this recently introduced non-rational part of the soul shares in reason somehow (πη). In which terms does it occur? Aristotle tells the reader in the sequence. According to him, both the akratic's and enkratic's reason, more properly the part possessing and exercising reason (λόγον ἔχον), is praised on the ground that in both cases reason exhorts the individual to do what is best. One important point that cannot go unnoticed, despite being usually overlooked, is that the passage apparently lends some support to non-Humean interpretations of the labour division. The passage seems to imply that reason is able to set out a course of action contrary to what the desire of a certain non-rational part of the soul proposes as a goal to be attained. That is clearly what happens in the case of akratic and enkratic individuals. Desire and reason go in opposite directions. This may well be counted as evidence for the view that reason in Aristotle is not a slave of the passions. Were it to be the case, Aristotle would not say that reason exhorts towards the best in the cases aforementioned, because reason would not have any conative power, being just a sophisticated instrument driven by desire. The passage seems to suggest that, regardless of the desires of the non-rational part of the soul, reason proposes its own goals. If that is taken seriously, the passage may be used to weaken the argument according to which character through habituation is *exclusively* responsible for setting the goals. In the case of akratic and enkratic individuals, their characters set goals that are in conflict with the ones set by reason.

What is the origin of the goals given by reason in akratic and enkratic individuals? Were they virtuous individuals that decayed morally and, due to that, still preserve in their reason good goals that were previously acquired through habituation? Or were these goals acquired irrespective of their character, for instance, through argument and/or through reflection? The passage under

scrutiny does not allow the interpreter to settle the matter. It raises, however, some uncomfortable questions that challenge Humean interpretations.

To provide proof of the existence of a non-rational part of soul differing from the vegetative one, Aristotle appeals to the example of akratic and enkratic individuals, in whom two parts of the soul are in conflict. One of these parts is clearly reason and the other, still without name, resists and fights against reason. To illustrate the situation, Aristotle uses the unexpected example of the paralysed limbs, which, against the command of its owner, go to the opposite direction of the order given. According to him, a similar situation takes place in the soul. What draws particular attention in the passage is that Aristotle claims that “the impulses of the akratics are contrary to each other” (ἐπὶ τὰναντία γὰρ αἱ ὁρμαὶ τῶν ἀκρατῶν) (*NE* 1102b21). The passage apparently endorses the view that reason also gives rise to its own impulses³⁶, which oppose the non-rational ones. On the one hand, if this claim is taken for granted by its face value, it becomes a stumbling block to one of the non-Humean interpretative strategies, according to which the desire involved in virtue of character is necessary to motivate the agent to pursue the goals chosen by reason. In the face-value interpretation, reason would not only be able to choose moral goals but would also be able to motivate individuals to act. On the other hand, Humean interpretations suffer an important setback from this passage. Broadly speaking, it looks as though two parts of the soul might set goals for the actions. In this case, reason would not be restricted to the means of actions but would also select their goals. The passage sets a considerable number of pressing questions, which stand in the way of both Humean and non-Humean interpretations of Aristotle’s claims. Yet, the pros outweigh the cons in the case of non-Humean interpretations, for, although the passage seems to block one of its side claims, at the end of the day such an interpretation gains ground in its major claim: that reason is entitled to set moral goals. But it is important to add that *not* exclusively.

In T14.iii, Aristotle insists on the claim that the announced non-rational part of the soul has a share in reason by saying that, in the case of enkratic individuals, that part of the soul listens to reason and that, in the case of temperate and courageous people, it listens even better. The conclusion that the reader immediately draws is that reason has the task of guiding individuals in

³⁶ There seems to be some plausibility in taking the passage below from *DA* as lending support to the claim that reason also has its own kind of desire. In the *DA*, Aristotle talks about desires going in opposite directions when reason and appetite diverge: “since, however, desires arise apposite to one another, and this occurs whenever rationality and the appetites are opposed, and this comes about in those with a perception of time (since reason encourages a pulling back because of what is going to happen, whereas appetite operates because of what is already present, since a pleasure appears to be an unqualified pleasure, and an unqualified good, because of its not seeing what is going to happen)” (ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁρέξεις γίνονται ἐναντία ἀλλήλαις, τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει ὅταν ὁ λόγος καὶ αἱ ἐπιθυμῖαι ἐναντία ᾧσι, γίνεται δ’ ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις αἴσθησιν ἔχουσιν (ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς διὰ τὸ μέλλον ἀνθέλκειν κελεύει, ἢ 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).

moral actions to attain the right goals³⁷. How is it possible? Must reason not be led instead of leading as the textual evidence from T1 to T4 in the Introduction defends? Why does Aristotle now concede to reason the leading role? Must reason not have its task restricted to the realm of the things towards the goals? At this moment of the text, these are questions left without an answer.

1.11. The Non-Rational Desiderative Part of the Soul and Its Share in Reason

Another important aspect of the passage I would like to call attention to is that, right after saying that a certain non-rational part of the soul shares in reason, Aristotle talks about the obedience that such a part has in relation to reason – and it is with regard to these terms that he will classify such a part of the soul as somehow rational in the sequence. Let me quote another passage from *NE* I.13:

T15. (i) φαίνεται δὴ καὶ τὸ ἄλογον διττόν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ φυτικὸν οὐδαμῶς κοινωνεῖ λόγου, τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν μετέχει πως, ἢ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πειθαρχικόν· οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν φίλων φάμεν ἔχειν λόγον, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ τῶν μαθηματικῶν. ὅτι δὲ πείθεται πως ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον, μηνύει καὶ ἡ νοουθέντις καὶ πᾶσα ἐπιτίμησις τε καὶ παράκλησις. **(ii)** εἰ δὲ χρή καὶ τοῦτο φάναι λόγον ἔχειν, διττόν ἐσται καὶ τὸ λόγον ἔχον, τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δ' ὥσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικόν τι (*NE* 1102b28-1103a3).

(i) The non-rational, then, too appears to be also twofold, since the vegetative part does not share in reason in any way, while the appetitive and in general desiderative does participate in it in a way, i.e. in so far as it is capable of listening to it and obeying it. It has reason, then, in the way we are said to have reason of our father and friends, and not in the way we are said to have that of mathematics. That the non-rational is in a way persuaded by reason is indicated by our practice of admonishing people, and all the different forms in which we reprimand and encourage them. **(ii)** If one should call this too “possessing reason”, then the part of the soul that possesses reason will be double in nature: one part of it will have it in the proper sense and in itself, another as something capable of listening as if to one’s father.

The passage recapitulates some points and adds new ones. The soul has two non-rational parts: the vegetative, which does not take part in human virtue, and the appetitive and in general desiderative, which opposes reason in the cases of *enkrateia* and *akrasia*. The description of the latter part of the soul gives rise to some worries, for Aristotle describes it as “ὄλως ὀρεκτικόν”, and this may lead some readers to take Aristotle to be assigning all the kinds of desire (appetite, spirit, and wish) to the non-rational part of the soul. Nevertheless, I do not think this is the case. One of the reasons is that sometimes the word “ὄρεξις” and its cognates make reference to non-

³⁷ Let me quote another passage that goes in the same direction: “[...] for just as a child should conduct himself in accordance with what the slave in charge of him tells him to do, so too the appetitive in us should conduct itself in accordance with what reason prescribes. Hence in the temperate person the appetitive should be in harmony with reason; for the fine is goal for both, and the temperate person has appetite for the things one should, in the way one should, and in the way one should, and when – which is what the rational prescription also lays down” (ὥσπερ δὲ τὸν παῖδα δεῖ κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ παιδαγωγοῦ ζῆν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν κατὰ τὸν λόγον. διὸ δεῖ τοῦ σώφρονος τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν συμφωνεῖν τῷ λόγῳ· σκοπὸς γὰρ ἀμφοῖν τὸ καλόν, καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖ ὁ σώφρων ὧν δεῖ καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε· οὕτω δὲ τάττει καὶ ὁ λόγος) (*NE* 1119b13-18).

rational desires (*EE* 1224b21-4, 1224a23-7, 1225a3, 1247b34-5, *Pol.* 1287a32, *DA* 433a6-8, and *MM* 1189a1-6), leaving wish out. Additionally, more three reasons can be given: (i) the characterization put forward by Aristotle regards a non-rational part of the soul, (ii) the wish is taken to be a rational desire in certain contexts (*DA* 432b5-6, *Top.* 126a13, and *Rh.* 1369a2-4), (iii) and a few lines above Aristotle attributed to reason some kind of desire, called generically of “impulse” (ὁρμή) (*NE* 1102b21)³⁸. Taking into account the overall framework, I take it to be more exegetically sound to read the passage as assigning to the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul only non-rational desires³⁹.

Despite being described all the time as non-rational, Aristotle suggests in T15.ii that the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul may be taken to be rational in a certain way. The terms employed to characterize it as rational cast the reader’s mind back to *NE* I.7, a chapter in which the ἔχον-λόγον part of the soul was subdivided into two parts as “ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ” and as “ἔχον [sc. λόγον] καὶ διανοούμενον”. In *NE* I.13, the descriptions employed are “τὸ δ’ ὡσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικόν τι”, a metaphor regarding obedience, and “τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ”. Although the descriptions are different from those employed in *NE* I.7, they have conspicuous convergences. On the one hand, there is a part of the soul that possesses reason strictly speaking and in itself. This means that this part enables its possessor, for instance, to articulate language, think, consider the pros and cons of a certain course of action, and argue. On the other hand, there is a part of the soul classified as rational exclusively *insofar as* it obeys and listens to reason, features that Aristotle insisted on right after naming such a part of the soul (*NE* 1102b30-35). From the description delineated by Aristotle in *NE* I.13, there is no evidence that the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part may be said rational unless in the strict terms formulated in the text, which do not seem to grant it any capacity of articulating thought⁴⁰. As a result, it would be exegetically controversial to say, for instance, that this part of the soul may carry out a highly complex cognitive task such as deliberating. By the time being, what one knows is that such a part may be influenced by reason and, moreover, is an action-producing part of the soul responsible for certain desires, a

³⁸ Another important textual evidence to ascribe wish to the rational part is its strong association with reason. For instance, Aristotle claims in the *EE* that “no one wishes for what he thinks is bad, but people act badly when their self-control fails” (βούλεται μὲν γὰρ οὐθεὶς ἃ οἶεται εἶναι κακά, πράττει δ’ ὅταν γίνηται ἀκρατής) (*EE* 1223b32-33). Moreover, Aristotle says that wish is akin (σύγγενος) to *prohairesis*, being this last indisputable rational (*NE* 1111b19-22).

³⁹ Another argument that can be raised in favour of my reading is that Aristotle writes in *DA* 433b5–6 that sometimes “desires are opposed to one another” (ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁρέξεις γίνονται ἐναντία ἀλλήλαις). In this passage, he does not seem to be envisaging a conflict among non-rational desires, for he explains the conflict by saying that it takes place “whenever reason and the appetites are opposed” (ὅταν ὁ λόγος καὶ αἱ ἐπιθυμῖαι ἐναντία ᾤσι).

⁴⁰ Curzer seems to be in agreement with this sort of interpretation: “Moral virtue has a sort of reason. But moral virtue is rational in that it can understand reason, appreciate reason, be persuaded by reason (1102b13ff). Moral virtue does not engage in reasoning on its own. It cannot, itself, determine the nature of the happy life” (Curzer 2012, p. 349).

point made clear by the examples of enkratic and akratic individuals. These remarks offer an approach that raises some pressing questions to the alternative reading when it comes to the nature of virtue of character.

The next passage officially establishes the division of virtues:

T16. διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν διαφορὰν ταύτην· λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικὰς τὰς δὲ ἠθικὰς, σοφίαν μὲν καὶ σύνεσιν καὶ φρόνησιν διανοητικὰς, ἐλευθεριότητα δὲ καὶ σωφροσύνην ἠθικὰς. λέγοντες γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἡθους οὐ λέγομεν ὅτι σοφὸς ἢ συνετὸς ἀλλ' ὅτι πρᾶος ἢ σώφρων· ἐπαινοῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν σοφὸν κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν τῶν ἕξεων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινετὰς ἀρετὰς λέγομεν (*NE* 1103a3-10).

Virtue too is divided according to this difference; for we call some of them virtues of thought, others virtues of character—theoretical wisdom, comprehension, and *phronesis* on the one hand counting on the side of the virtues of thought, generosity and temperance counting among those of character. For when we talk about character, we do not say that someone is wise, or has comprehension, but rather that he is mild or moderate; but we do also praise someone wise for his disposition, and the dispositions we praise are the ones we call “virtues”.

This passage is very crucial to comprehend the classification of virtues. In my view, it offers evidence to challenge the alternative interpretation. When Aristotle says that virtues are also defined in accordance with this difference, he makes reference to the distinction just introduced between reason strictly speaking and the obedient part of the soul⁴¹. Such a distinction now is employed to delimit the virtues. The virtues belonging to the ἔχον-λόγον part strictly speaking are labelled virtues of thought, while the ones belonging to the obedient part are labelled virtues of character. Such a dichotomous division is affirmed again at the beginning of *NE* II.1 (1103a14-18) and repeated in *NE* VI.2 (1138b35-1139a1). However, the construal advanced does not pass free of controversies and Lorenz argues that the passage gives no support to the division proposed:

But in saying this [*sc.* since we say that some are of thought, others of character] he may only have in mind that the distinction between the virtues of thought and the virtues of character depends importantly on the distinction between reason strictly speaking and the obedient part of the soul, in that the virtues of thought simply are states of reason strictly speaking, whereas the virtues of character crucially involve, and in fact are at least constituted by, certain good, properly habituated states of the obedient part of the soul. It is worth noting not only what Aristotle is saying here, but also what he is not saying: he is not saying, not here and not anywhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics* [...] that the virtues of thought belong to reason, whereas the virtues of character belong to a non-rational part of the soul. It seems to me that Aristotle has good philosophical reason to think that the virtues

⁴¹ One question that may be raised is about which is the exact reference of the demonstrative pronoun “ταύτην” in line 1103a4. Two readings are possible. The word “ταύτην” may be anaphoric and make reference to the two rational parts of the soul. In this case, this division is taken to be the criterion to divide virtues. Another possibility is to read the word “ταύτην” as cataphoric. This reading assumes that the virtues are divided into virtues of characters and of thought without claiming anything about how this division is to be taken in terms of parts of the soul. However, even if one adopts the cataphoric reading, it is perfectly possible to take the division of the virtues to be grounded in the division of the rational part, for the classification of virtues is introduced just after the division of the rational part of the soul, which, given the context, is easily seen as designed for providing the criterion to catalogue virtues.

of character are partially constituted by a certain good state of reason strictly speaking (Lorenz 2009, p. 193).

Considering exclusively *NE* I.13, I see no reason to endorse Lorenz's claim. Although the passage T16 taken in isolation may leave room for his interpretation, the previous argumentative steps of the passage did not pave the way to such a conclusion. Quite to the contrary, they support the view that what is now called virtue of character is a virtue of a specific non-rational part of the soul, which has some kind of interaction with the rational part and, due to that, is called rational in a broad sense. It cannot go unnoticed that, even though I consider that virtue of character is a good disposition of a non-rational part of the soul, one of its most important features is to be obedient to reason. This means that a good disposition of the appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul consists in paying attention to reason. From that, there is no need to derive the stronger claim that virtue of character is to be partly rational in the strict sense. When one says virtue of character, this expression already presupposes a relation of obedience of a certain non-rational part of the soul to reason, even though technically this part is completely non-rational in the strict sense. If character becomes virtuous, consequently it has a share in reason *insofar as* it obeys reason.

I think that one crucial methodological divergence between my interpretation and Lorenz's one is that he seems to read *NE* I.13 through the glasses of other passages from the *NE*, such as the passages expounded in Section 1.6, while I make an attempt of doing otherwise: to consider the *NE*'s posterior passages in light of the official classification of virtues displayed in *NE* I.13⁴².

Even in the *EE*, Aristotle formulates the division of the virtues in a fashion similar to the *NE*:

T17. μετὰ ταῦτα λεκτέον ὅτι ἐπειδὴ δύο μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ αἱ ἀρεταὶ κατὰ ταῦτα διήρηνται, καὶ αἱ μὲν τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος διανοητικαί [...] αἱ δὲ τοῦ ἀλόγου, ἔχοντος δ' ὄρεξιν (*EE* 1221b27-31).

We must next state that there are two parts of the soul, and the virtues are classified in accordance with these. There are the virtues of thought, which belong to the part that has reason [...] and there are the virtues of the part that is non-rational but possesses desire.

Following the same pattern found in the *NE*, the *EE* also claims that there are, on the one hand, the virtues of thought, which belong to the rational part of soul, while, on the other hand, the other virtues, which are the virtues of character and belong to the non-rational part of the soul. If Lorenz's view were adopted, the *NE* would indicate a significant departure from the classification of the virtues found in the *EE*. Nevertheless, the similarity of language used in both works and the

⁴² Some interpreters who endorse the division of virtues I have defended are the followings: Moss (2011, p. 207-20 and 2012, p. 163-74), Cooper (1999, p 237-252), Cooper (2012, 142-144), Müller (2019, p. 10-56).

previous argumentative steps found in *NE* I.13 do not make room for drawing the conclusion intended by Lorenz. In the next chapters, I will show that the passages that are usually adduced to ground the claim that the virtues of character are partially constituted by a certain good disposition of the reason may be read otherwise.

Chapter 2: Habituation and Upbringing⁴³

2.1. Upbringing: the introduction of a controversy

It is uncontroversial that habituation is a crucial notion in Aristotle's ethics. The *NE* teaches us that virtue of character is acquired through habituation (*NE* 1103a17-18, 1103a31-34, 1103b3-6, and 1103b22-23). No one can become virtuous without developing virtue of character accompanied by *phronesis* (*NE* 1144a36-b1 and 1144b16-17). Aristotle himself affirms that the goal of *NE*'s investigation is to promote virtue, rather than merely learn about it (*NE* 1095a5-6, 1103b27-8, and 1179a35-b3). But how should we conceive of habituation?

A long-standing and widespread tendency, rarely challenged or questioned, is to assume that habituation is built on the idea of upbringing. That is, several interpreters conceptually frame habituation as if Aristotle used this notion mainly, if not exclusively, referring to the moral education provided in childhood⁴⁴. In this chapter, I challenge this standard view by discussing three interpretative steps that have traditionally laid the foundations for the association between habituation and upbringing. I argue that one often-quoted piece of evidence in the *NE* in favour of this association (*NE* 1095b4-6) is based on a mistranslation of the verb “ἄγω”, which has remained widely unquestioned in Anglophone translations and interpretations. I show that there is no philological ground for arguing that this verb introduces the idea of upbringing in the passage. Next, I discuss three passages from the investigation of habituation in *NE*'s book II (*NE* 1103b23-25, 1104b11-13, and 1105a1-3) that might be used to support the claim that the notion of habituation is unavoidably embedded in the idea of upbringing. I argue that Aristotle is not committed to this claim in these passages. Rather, they are better taken as an introduction of Aristotle's views about the best strategy for instilling the virtue of character through habituation. Compelling evidence in favour of keeping the notions of habituation and upbringing apart comes from the *EE*. There, references to upbringing are completely absent from the investigation of habituation. This absence constitutes one more piece of evidence for my claim that Aristotle did not conceive of habituation as exclusively limited to upbringing. In the final sections, I turn my attention to *NE*'s closing chapter. This chapter is frequently interpreted as providing textual ground for the association between habituation and upbringing. However, there are compelling reasons for resisting this association. In the first part of the

⁴³ A shorter version of this chapter is forthcoming as a paper with the title *Habituation and Upbringing in the Nicomachean Ethics in Ancient Philosophy*.

⁴⁴ For examples of this assumption in the *NE* scholarship, see Burnyeat 1980; Sherman 1989, p. 157-199; Moss 2012, p. 197; 2014, p. 233-234, 239; Curzer 2012, p. 13; Kristjánsson 2013, p. 432; Frede 2013, p. 22; Jimenez 2015; 2016, p. 24; 2020; Hampson 2019. The view is also found in the works of contemporary philosophers who engage in dialogue with the *NE*. See, for instance, Korsgaard 1996, p. 3-4; McDowell 1998a, p. 174, 189, 197; Williams 2006, p. 44.

chapter (*NE X.9*, 1179a33-b31), Aristotle claims that in order for reason to have the power to influence someone's action, this person should already have a character akin to virtue. Yet, I deny the further interpretative step of taking this condition to require a good upbringing. Furthermore, I show that *NE X.9*'s role of making a transition from the *NE* to the *Pol.* has profound implications for our understanding of its claims. The second part of *NE X.9* (1179b31-1181b23) serves as a transition from the *NE* to the *Pol.*, which means that the questions and discussions raised in this part should be regarded as already embedded to some extent in the investigative agenda of *Pol.*. This recognition implies that the claims about upbringing contained in that part should not be taken to be aiming to provide further details about the account of habituation from *NE II*.

Challenging the traditional assumption that Aristotle in the *NE* thinks of habituation in terms of upbringing is philosophically important because it avoids saddling Aristotle's ethics with the accusation that it only allows those with a good upbringing to have the opportunity to become virtuous. A good upbringing is a necessary requirement only for the best possible education, such as outlined in *Pol.* VII and VIII and discussed in *NE X.9*. But from this, we cannot conclude that it is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of virtue of character. My interpretation has the advantage of providing a less restrictive view of habituation in *NE II* by significantly weakening the association between habituation and upbringing. In regard to the discussion of the labour division, it is important to avoid the claim that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for becoming virtuous. If this is the case, this means that a bad habituation of character in childhood sets once and for all the moral disposition and that the individuals are bound to pursue the set of values that was acquired in the moral education they received in their childhood, mostly through the shaping of their non-rational desires.

2.2. The Association Between Habituation and Upbringing: developmental accounts

In his seminal paper "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good", Burnyeat defends an interpretation of Aristotle's ethics that firmly ties habituation to upbringing. The paper argues for what Burnyeat calls a "developmental picture" in Aristotle's ethics (Burnyeat 1980, p. 70). This developmental picture emphasises the crucial importance, even the necessity, of a good moral upbringing to the acquisition of virtue (Burnyeat 1980, p. 70, 72, 74-75, 79, 81-82, 84, 86-87). Burnyeat introduces his view by describing his interest in the "primitive material from which character and a mature morality must grow", adding that "a wide range of desires and feelings are shaping patterns of motivation and response in a person well before he comes to a reasoned outlook on his life as a whole, and certainly before he integrates this reflective consciousness with his actual behaviour" (Burnyeat 1980, p. 70). Because of Burnyeat's association of habituation to upbringing, he con-

ceives of habituation as the moral training received early in the process of moral development, that is, in childhood. On the basis of this view of habituation, one ends up having to admit that Aristotle only granted the possibility to become virtuous to those individuals who had experienced a good upbringing. When the time of upbringing is over, it is no longer possible to habituate character for the acquisition of virtue⁴⁵. Burnyeat formulates this point as follows: “[...] the necessary beginnings or starting points, which I have argued to be correct ideas about what actions are noble and just, are *not available to anyone who has not had the benefit of an upbringing in good habits*” (Burnyeat 1980, p. 72, my emphasis). “He [Aristotle’s student]”, Burnyeat claims, “has a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant which other, less well brought up people lack because they have not tasted the pleasures of what is noble” (Burnyeat 1980, 75). Burnyeat’s approach amounts to the view that the lack of a good upbringing deprives an individual of the possibility of living a virtuous life. In his interpretation, the training of character through habituation is conceived within the limits of the idea of upbringing.

Following Burnyeat, Nancy Sherman presents a “developmental account” of habituation in her book *The Fabric of Character* (1989, p. 7). One of her central claims is ascribing to Aristotle what she calls a “developmental conception of the child’s ethical growth” (1989, p. 160; see also p. 79, 159, and 161). Explaining the powers of habituation in cognitive and affective development, Sherman explicitly ties habituation with upbringing. Habituation is thought of as the moral training received in childhood. In my opinion, Sherman provides the fullest expression of the upbringing assumption. In her book, this assumption is spelled out and articulated more explicitly than in Burnyeat’s paper:

My motive in taking a serious look at the process of *moral education* is the belief that the mechanical theory of habituation ultimately makes mysterious *the transition between childhood and moral maturity*. It leaves unexplained how the *child* with merely 'habituated' virtue can ever develop the capacities requisite for practical reason and inseparable from full virtue [...] Now it is true that no one would seriously hold that rationality emerges in an instant. To say 'Now a boy becomes a man' (at whatever age-thirteen, eighteen, or twenty-one) is to create an artifice for law, not to explain when and how [...] *Aristotle might accept something like this picture: there might be an early period in which affective capacities are cultivated, followed by the more active development of rational (and deliberative) capacities, and then eventually the emergence of full rationality.* [...] Thus, the extremely *young child* [...] may not engage in the reasoning process in a very extensive way [...] As the *child becomes older*, the cultivation of these cognitive capacities will become an essential element in the development of the affections. But he will not yet, in a substantive way, cultivate the more deliberative skills that enter into complex choice-making. That comes later. I shall argue for something like this conception in the pages that follow. My overall claim is that if full virtue is to meet certain conditions, then this must be reflected in the educational process. The *child* must be seen as being educated towards that end (1989, p. 158-160, my emphasis).

⁴⁵ Some interpreters have already explored certain aspects of this issue. See, for instance, McDowell 1998a, p. 31; 2009, p. 53-54, 56; Vasiliou 1996, p. 793.

Burnyeat and Sherman are two prominent representatives of the widespread developmental approach to habituation⁴⁶. One idea underlying this approach is the claim that Aristotle conceives of habituation as aiming at explaining the moral development of human beings from childhood to maturity. Then, habituation is confined to the initial formation of character. But I think that there are good exegetical and philosophical reasons not to take this view as a starting point for the discussion of habituation. Habituation might be construed more broadly, beyond the limits imposed by the widely endorsed developmental approaches. I intend to show that Aristotle does not deny the possibility of a successful habituation of character after upbringing.

A good starting point for understanding the textual and philosophical grounds of the upbringing assumption is the first passage quoted by Burnyeat in his paper. His interpretation of the verb “ἄγω”, occurring in the passage in its form “ἤχθαι”, has remained practically uncontested for decades. It has had important philosophical implications for the interpretation of habituation in the *NE*.

2.3. *NE* 1.4: Aristotle’s Audience and the Upbringing Assumption

Burnyeat’s interpretation (1980, p. 71) begins with a passage which he takes to be claiming that upbringing is a necessary requirement for following Aristotle’s lessons:

T1. ἴσως οὖν ἡμῖν γε ἀρκτέον ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων. διὸ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἤχθαι καλῶς τὸν περὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων καὶ ὅλων τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον ἰκανῶς. ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι, καὶ εἰ τοῦτο φαίνοιτο ἀρκούντως, οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι· ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἔχει ἢ λάβοι ἂν ἀρχὰς ῥαδίως. ᾧ δὲ μηδέτερον ὑπάρχει τούτων, ἀκουσάτω τῶν Ἡσιόδου (*NE* 1095b2-9). Presumably, then, in our case, we must start from what is knowable to us. Consequently, in order to listen appropriately to discussion about what is fine and just, i.e. about the objects of political expertise in general, one must *have been well brought up*. For the starting point is *that* it is so, and if this were sufficiently clear to us – well, in that case there will be no need to know in addition *why*. But such a person either has the relevant principles, or might easily grasp them. As for anyone who has neither of the things in question, he should listen to what Hesiod says (my emphasis).

Although all the argumentative steps of this passage are beset by philosophical controversies, in what follows I will single out one aspect of Burnyeat’s interpretation which contributes decisively to his endorsement of the upbringing assumption. In his interpretation of the passage, he associates the acquisition of “the that”⁴⁷, a necessary requirement for attending

⁴⁶ See footnote 44 above for a list of several interpreters who are to some extent committed to this developmental approach.

⁴⁷ What Aristotle means by “the that” (τὸ ὅτι) or “the why” (τὸ διότι) in the passage T1 is unclear. However, this does not constitute a problem for my claims. My interpretation does not depend on the exact meaning of either expression. It demands only that, whatever “the that” means, its acquisition is not only possible thanks to a good upbringing. Good training in habits, even later in life, may also provide the starting point (the that) for following

Aristotle's lessons, with a good upbringing. He states that "*the necessary beginnings or starting points*, which I have argued to be correct ideas about what actions are noble and just, *are not available to anyone who has not had the benefit of an upbringing in good habits*" (1980, 72, my emphasis). This interpretation hinges crucially on Burnyeat's understanding of the verb "ἤχθαι" in line 1095b3. He takes it to introduce the idea of upbringing, expressed in the translation by the English verb "bring someone up". Read like this, the passage above demands that Aristotle's students have been brought up in good habits⁴⁸. This interpretation has the immediate consequence that whoever did not receive a good upbringing will fail to fulfil Aristotle's requirement for taking advantage of his classes.

The aforementioned interpretation of the verb "ἤχθαι" puts us at a pivotal interpretative crossroads. The interpreter must assume either that: (i) Aristotle excludes from his classes anybody who acquired a virtuous disposition of character by undergoing training in good habits later in life but who did not have a good upbringing, (ii) or Aristotle deems that training of character must necessarily be thought of in terms of upbringing. If it were possible to train character not only during the transition from childhood to maturity, then there would be no ground for endorsing the former option. It would be completely pointless. The latter option inconveniently flirts with the disputable philosophical claim that upbringing determines the formation of an individual's character. In other words, it assumes that only a good upbringing provides the necessary starting points for appropriately following Aristotle's ethical lessons and becoming virtuous. The lack of a good upbringing is regarded as an insurmountable obstacle to moral progress. Based on interpreting the verb "ἄγω" in the passage above as associated with upbringing, the interpreter is committed to one of the two positions just outlined.

Several other interpreters also associate the verb "ἤχθαι" closely with upbringing. For instance, about the passage under discussion Kraut writes: "in a familiar passage in the

Aristotle's lessons and becoming virtuous. I side with Burnyeat's understanding of the expression "the that" in the passage T1. For him, to have "the that" is to be able to recognize which actions are virtuous in moral contexts. Such a recognition requires an educated perception, which enables its possessor to spot what constitutes a virtuous action in the circumstances. Learners should come to Aristotle's lesson already having a "general evaluative attitude" (1980, p. 71-72; see also Vasiliou 1996, p. 777, 784). This evaluative attitude, however, involve not only a cognitive dimension, but also an affective one. Aristotle makes this clear when he demands from his students that their emotions must be aligned with reason (*NE* 1095a10) and when he describes habituation as involving the training of emotions and desires (*NE* 1103b16-21, 1104a33-b3, and 1104b3-11). See Karbowski 2019, p. 171-172. Spinelli (2012) articulates in detail how the notions of "the that" (τὸ ὅτι) or "the why" (τὸ διότι) are related to the methodological discussion carried out in *NE* I.3-4.

⁴⁸ Like Burnyeat, Vasiliou defends a close association of upbringing, habituation, and the acquisition of "the that": "being well brought up is being habituated to possess 'the that' [...] 'the that' is what is acquired through habituation, in upbringing, and not the sort of thing we learn from a piece of metaethical argument" (1996, 777 and 787). Cooper also construes the passage in terms of upbringing: "Here we need to take into account Aristotle's notorious insistence that no one is to take part in the philosophical study of ethics and politics without first, through *their earlier upbringing and education*, having acquired good and virtuous habits of feeling. [...] In fact, they will thereby turn those early habits into fully virtuous states of character" (2012, 77, my emphasis).

Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle says that to make progress in the study of politics, we must begin with what is already known to us, and that good students of the subject therefore ought to *have been brought up in good habits* (1.4. 1095b3-6)” (1998, p. 271, my emphasis). Vasiliou relies on the association to support what he calls “the good-upbringing restriction”. He uses this label to refer to the requirement which must be met by those attending Aristotle’s lessons (1996, p. 773). Vasiliou states: “I suggest a reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that focuses on Aristotle’s claim that the proper student of ethics *must be well brought up* [...] Aristotle claims that *being well brought up is a necessary condition for being an appropriate student of ethics*” (1996, p. 773, my emphasis). On Irwin’s interpretation, the passage justifies the claim that Aristotle’s lessons were designed for students who had a good upbringing (1978, p. 256). Recently, Karbowski has also given voice to this traditional interpretation: “in this passage Aristotle uses the methodological dictum that an inquirer must start from what is familiar to us in order to explain why *a good upbringing is a necessary condition for attaining benefit from his lectures*”⁴⁹ (2019, p. 164, my emphasis, see also p. 166 and 192; 2015, p. 122, 125, and 127-128). In the same vein, Broadie comments on the passage 1095b4-6 like this: “but we do need, Aristotle says, to have been brought up in good ways of feeling and acting” (1991, p. 22; see also p. 23, 25-26, 38, and 58)⁵⁰. McDowell explicitly articulates the

⁴⁹ Two distinctly formulated claims lead alike to the upbringing assumption. These claims are the following: (claim₁) “a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for taking advantage of Aristotle’s lessons”; and (claim₂) “a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue of character”. From these claims, we might propose the two following scenarios: (i) a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for taking advantage of Aristotle’s lessons but not for acquiring virtue of character; (ii) a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue of character but not for taking advantage of Aristotle’s lessons. To fully understand the implications of the two cases above, we must recognize that, if a good upbringing is not a necessary requirement, then a good training of character is a necessary requirement. It is uncontroversial that habituation is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of virtue of character. The important question is whether habituation should be understood exclusively in terms of upbringing or in a broader way. If we endorse option (i), we awkwardly posit that Aristotle demands from his students much more than what is required for acquiring the virtue of character. As Aristotle aims to help his students along the path of virtue (*NE* 1103b27-29), it makes no sense for him to demand from them more than what the acquisition of the virtue of character requires. Perhaps, if his aim were to help virtuous people excel in their exercise of virtue, or to make them exercise virtue in the highest degree (granted that this is possible), it might be reasonable to establish a much more demanding requirement for attending his classes than that which is required for acquiring a basic-level virtue of character, so to speak. But this is not the case. On the other hand, if we endorse option (ii), we end up committed to a position that is no more plausible. If a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue of character but not for taking advantage of Aristotle’s lessons, Aristotle accepts in his classes those who will never be able to acquire virtue of character on account of failing to meet the good upbringing requirement. In this case, Aristotle’s lessons would at most provide students with the opportunity of becoming enkratic individuals. However, this cannot be the case because the lessons’ aim is to help people along the path of virtue (*NE* 1103b27-29). Claim₁ and claim₂ are strongly related to each other. An underlying assumption of the traditional interpretation is that a good upbringing is necessary for taking advantage of Aristotle’s classes only because it is a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue of character. Claim₂ grounds claim₁. I am completely indebted to Lucas Angioni for pressing questions and objections which made me improve this point and formulate in better terms my argument.

⁵⁰ See also Reeve 1992, p. 49-50; Achtenberg 2002, p. 77-78; Hughes 2013, p. 16-17, 71, 76-77, 81, 234; Gill 2015, p. 104; Jimenez 2019, p. 372-374. In commenting on the passage, Dahl (1984, p. 71) avoids committing Aristotle to the notion of upbringing: “Aristotle’s insistence that ethics can be studied profitably only by those who have had experience and the right kind of training (1095a2-4, 1095b4-6). Without this kind of experience or training one will not have or be able to get the *archai* of ethics”.

impact of the idea of upbringing on *NE II*'s discussion of habituation: “[...] what determines the content of a virtuous person’s correct conception of the end is not an exercise of practical intellect, but rather the moulding of his motivational propensities in upbringing, which is described in book 2 of the *EN* as instilling virtue of character” (1998b, p. 114). These are but a few examples of how interpreters use passage T1 to justify the upbringing assumption. Finally, among the recent English translations of the *NE*, the passage T1 is widely understood as introducing the idea of upbringing. There is a consistent tendency to use the verb “bring someone up” to translate the Greek verb “ἄγω”⁵¹ (Apostle 1975, Irwin 1999, Crisp 2000, Rowe 2002, Ross revised by Lesley 2009, Bartlett and Collins 2011, Reeve 2014)⁵².

To highlight the implicit philosophical commitments of this interpretation of the verb “ἄγω”, I pose two questions. If only those who had a good upbringing can take advantage of Aristotle’s lessons, should one assume that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a virtuous character? If not, why would Aristotle not accept as students those who managed to acquire a good character and may be aptly described as being *well trained* in character, even though they did not receive a good upbringing, that is, this training did not happen during their first formation of character? These questions unearth the commitments underlying the traditional interpretation of passage T1. By committing to the view that only well-brought-up individuals are suited to take part in Aristotle’s lessons, the traditional interpretation contributes substantially to the view that the notion of habituation developed in *NE II* is necessarily coupled with upbringing. Let me flesh out my point. Suppose that only early training of character in good habits makes someone suited to attend lessons in ethics, with the purpose of moral improvement (*NE* 1095a5-6, 1103b26-

⁵¹ Interestingly, this widespread association between “ἄγω” and upbringing in English is not found in certain other languages. At least in Spanish and French, it is not uncommon to find the passage translated without that association. For instance, in French, the passage is translated: “aussi faut-il, par les habitudes prises, avoir été amené à bon port pour être capable d’entendre un enseignement portant sur les actions belles et en général sur les questions politiques” (Gauthier and Jolif 1958, my emphasis) or “et voilà pourquoi *des mœurs et des sentiments honnêtes sont la préparation nécessaire* de quiconque veut faire une étude féconde des principes de la vertu, de la justice, en un mot, des principes de la politique” (Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire revised by Gomez-Muller 1992, my emphasis). Tricot sides the English translations: “c’est la raison pour laquelle il faut avoir été élevé dans les mœurs honnêtes, quand on se dispose à écouter avec profit un enseignement portant sur l’honnête, le juste, et d’une façon générale sur tout ce qui a trait à la Politique” (Tricot 2007, my emphasis). In Spanish: “Por tanto, conviene que el que conveniente oyente ha de ser en la materia de cosas buenas y justas, y, en fin, en la disciplina de república, *en cuando a sus costumbres sea bien acostumbrado*” (Abril 2001, my emphasis) and “por eso es menester que el que se propone aprender acerca de las cosas buenas y justas y, en suma, de la política, *haya sido bien conducido por sus costumbres*” (Araújo and Mariás 2009, my emphasis).

⁵² Rackham (1934) favoured a neutral rendering of the passage in his translation, using the expression: “to have been well trained in his habits”. More recently, Beresford (2020) also breaks from the mainstream translation. His rendering of the passage does not commit it to the idea of upbringing. His translation is: “That’s why you already have *to have been pointed in the right direction by good habits*, if you hope to get very much out of a course of lectures on what’s honourable and right, or any other moral or political question” (my emphasis). However, despite his neutral translation of T1, Beresford’s rendering of the subsequent text suggests the upbringing assumption: “because our starting point is the fact that X, and if X seems pretty obvious, that’s all we need. We won’t need [to talk about] why X is the case. People like that [*with the right upbringing*] either already have, or can easily grasp, [the right] principles” (my emphasis).

29, and 1179a35-b4). Then, it is practically pointless to offer any account of habituation that is not related to or thought of in terms of upbringing. On this view, upbringing has a decisive, and potentially deterministic, role in the consolidation of a virtuous character. It sounds as if the character of someone who did not have a good upbringing can never be changed to become fit for the lessons. Then, a good character cannot be acquired without a good upbringing⁵³. This interpretation implies that people who received moral training in good habits later in life are excluded from the lessons. Even worse, the interpretation might suggest that there could be no such individuals. The following question becomes pressing: if there may be late training of character, why should people who have received such a training be excluded from the lessons and be considered lost causes?

In light of these considerations, it is evident that the traditional interpretation of *NE* I.4 suggests that a good upbringing is a necessary condition for the consolidation of a good character. By doing so, the interpretation severely restricts our understanding of habituation. In the next sections, I intend to show that this is not Aristotle's view. Rather, I will argue that compelling evidence in the *NE* allows us to draw a different picture of his claims about habituation and the education of character.

2.4. The Verb “ἄγω” and the Idea of Upbringing: a weak link

As I now intend to show, the widely endorsed association between the verb “ἄγω” and the idea of upbringing is philologically questionable. Therefore, it should not be taken for granted. The first step towards away from the traditional interpretation of passage T1 and towards a new understanding of habituation in the *NE* is to recognize that the verb “ἄγω” has no uncontroversial association with upbringing in that passage.

First, note that the verb “ἄγω” is not used primarily to indicate upbringing. Therefore, this meaning should not be taken for granted and must be regarded with due caution even if it is a reasonable possibility. The verb's core meaning is related to “lead”, “carry”, “bring”, and “guide”. The idea of upbringing is derived from these basic meanings. It is not hard to see why. Broadly speaking, it is perfectly reasonable to think of upbringing as a process in which the child is guided

⁵³ Here is McDowell's formulation of this consequence of the upbringing assumption: “[Aristotle] proceeds as if the content of the conception of doing well *is fixed once and for all*, in the minds of the sort of people he assumes his audience to be, *by their upbringing*; as if moral development for such a person is over and done with at the point when his parents send him out into the world to make his own life” (2009, p. 56, my emphasis, see also p. 53-54). However, I do not think that this view can be attributed to Aristotle. Even though McDowell considered this view to be Aristotle's position, he was critical of it. Like McDowell, I feel uncomfortable with the traditional interpretation, but, unlike him, I think that there is a way out. There is textual evidence and good philosophical reasons for keeping apart the notions of habituation and upbringing. This provides space for extending habituation's reach beyond upbringing. For an assessment of McDowell's critical views on the topic, see Vasiliou 2007, p. 64-65.

and led by someone in charge of his intellectual or moral formation. However, the meaning of this verb need not be so restrictive when it relates to moral training. Nothing prevents us from also including, in our consideration of the trainee’s moral education and his process of acquiring a virtuous character, the influence exerted by those surrounding him and contributing to his formation. Without invoking the idea of upbringing, we may recognize that individuals are morally guided and influenced by any person or any social institution that help them adopt a certain pattern of behaviour. I think these cases should be included in our attempt to discern the meaning of the verb “ἄγω” in passage T1. They fit the core meaning of the verb perfectly. Moreover, they help to make room for a deflationary interpretation of the passage. So, I suggest that the verb “ἄγω” should not be drastically restricted to refer exclusively to upbringing. The Greek verb has a broader meaning, referring to a less restrictive idea of having been guided or led in good habits. This broader meaning encompasses upbringing but, more importantly, extends beyond it⁵⁴.

Aristotle’s use of the verb “ἄγω” throughout the *NE* and in one passage from the *Cat.* offers compelling support for my view. Solid textual evidence indicates that, in most of its occurrences throughout the *NE*, the Greek verb does not mean upbringing. The evidence below undermine beyond any reasonable doubt the possibility that the verb refers exclusively to upbringing because it would have this technical meaning in the *NE*. As I intend to show, the verb is followed by a certain expression whenever used in this technical way in the *NE*. In most of its occurrences, it is found in contexts in which its core meaning is “to be guided”, “to be led”, and “to be driven”. The list below contains almost every occurrence of “ἄγω” in the *NE*⁵⁵. In what follows, I discuss the different meanings of “ἄγω” in each of the groups below:

T2a. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀκόλαστος ἐπιθυμεῖ τῶν ἡδέων πάντων ἢ τῶν μάλιστα, καὶ ἄγεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ὥστε ἀντὶ τῶν ἄλλων ταῦθ’ αἰρεῖσθαι (*NE* 1119a1-3, my emphasis).

⁵⁴ Certain passages in the *NE* might arguably be seen as providing textual support for this more inclusive interpretation of what it means to be guided. For instance, laws, social constraints, and punishments are described as the ways in which cities may encourage certain actions and virtues while reproaching others (*NE* X.9, 1180a1-10). These social mechanisms might be arguably regarded as a form of guidance towards what is morally required. Aristotle himself recognizes that the social and civic punishments (κολάσεις) inflicted on those who misbehave play a part in influencing people’s ways of living and acting (*NE* 1104b16-18, 1113b21-30, 1179b11-13, and 1180a4-12; see also *EE* 1214b29-33). In the case of laws, even when individuals do what the law prescribes, but do not act on the right reasons (*NE* 1144a13-16), the law might be seen as providing at least some guidance about what should be done. But we cannot completely discard the possibility of being guided or influenced by another person (*NE* 1105a23). One may also be influenced by better ways of spending time and better conversations, which trigger a process of changing perspectives and values as suggested by *Cat.* 10, 13a18-31, a passage that I discuss below. These are distinct ways of being guided or led in moral actions in some sense, which do not imply having a tutor as a child might. Given these passages, it is plausible to imagine that the idea of guidance extends to any milieu in which individuals are exposed to influences which somehow shape their way of living and behaviours. See Muñoz 2002, 186-195. My thanks to João Hobuss, Fernando Mendonça, Carol Atack, Christof Rapp, and Paulo Ferreira for discussions on this point.

⁵⁵ The only occurrences of the verb “ἄγω” in the *NE* which are not included in this list are to be found in the passages T1 and T6. Given their peculiarities, I have decided to give them a separate treatment.

So the self-indulgent person, for his part, has an appetite for any pleasant things, or for the most pleasant, and he *is driven by his appetite* so as to choose these instead of anything else (my emphasis).

T2b. βούλεται γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος ἀτάραχος εἶναι καὶ μὴ ἄγεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους (NE 1125b33-35, my emphasis).

For being mild means being unperturbed, and *not being carried away by one's feelings* (my emphasis).

T2c. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἄγεται προαιρούμενος, νομίζων αἰεὶ δεῖν τὸ παρὸν ἡδὺ διώκειν· ὁ δ' οὐκ οἶεται μὲν, διώκει δέ (NE 1146b22-23, my emphasis).

For the [intemperate] is drawn even as he decides to go in that direction, because he thinks one should always pursue what offers pleasure now; whereas the akratic type doesn't think one should, but pursues it all the same (my emphasis).

T2d. ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμία ἄγει (NE 1147a34, my emphasis).

The appetite *drives* [him to it] (my emphasis).

T2e. τῶν δὲ μὴ προαιρουμένων ὁ μὲν ἄγεται διὰ τὴν ἡδονήν, ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ φεύγειν τὴν λύπην τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας, ὥστε διαφέρουσιν ἀλλήλων (NE 1150a25-27, my emphasis).

Of the non-deciding type, *the one is led on because of the pleasure*, the other because that way he will avoid the pain arising from the appetite, so that they are different from each other (my emphasis).

T2f. οἱ μὲν γὰρ βουλευσάμενοι οὐκ ἐμμένουσιν οἷς ἐβουλεύσαντο διὰ τὸ πάθος, οἱ δὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ βουλεύσασθαι ἄγονται ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους (NE 1150b19-22, my emphasis).

For some people deliberate and then fail to stick to the results of the deliberation because of their affective condition, while others *are led by the affection* because they fail to deliberate (my emphasis).

T2g. οἱ δὲ οὐχ ὑπὸ λόγου, ἐπεὶ ἐπιθυμίας γε λαμβάνουσι, καὶ ἄγονται πολλοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἡδονῶν (NE 1151b10-12, my emphasis).

Whereas with the stubborn sort it is reason, since in fact they do acquire appetites, and many of them *are led on by pleasures* (my emphasis).

T2h. ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἔχων ὁ δ' οὐκ ἔχων φαύλας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ ἡδεσθαι παρὰ τὸν λόγον, ὁ δ' οἷος ἡδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴ ἄγεσθαι (NE 1152a1-3, my emphasis).

Only the one does it while having bad appetites, the other while not having, and the one is such as not to feel pleasure contrary to the prescription, while the other is such as to feel it but *not be led by it* (my emphasis).

T2i. ῥέπειν γὰρ τοὺς πολλοὺς πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ δουλεύειν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς, διὸ δεῖν εἰς τοῦναντίον ἄγειν (NE 10.1, 1172a31-33, my emphasis).

Most people incline towards it, and are slaves to pleasures, so that *one has to draw them in the contrary direction* (my emphasis).

T3a. εἰ δὴ πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη οὕτω τὸ ἔργον εὖ ἐπιτελεῖ, πρὸς τὸ μέσον βλέπουσα καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἄγουσα τὰ ἔργα (NE 1106b8-9, my emphasis).

If, then, it is in this way that every kind of expert knowledge completes its function well, by looking to the intermediate and *guiding what it produces by reference to this* (my emphasis).

T3b. καὶ τέλος οὐ πασῶν ἕτερόν τι, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰς τὴν τελέωσιν ἀγομένων τῆς φύσεως (NE 1153a11-12, my emphasis).

And not all [pleasures] have something else as an end, but only those involved in the *bringing to completion* of one's nature (my emphasis).

T4a. εἰς σχῆμα δ' ἀναλογίας οὐ δεῖ ἄγειν, ὅταν ἀλλάζωνται (NE 1133b1, my emphasis).

But one should not *introduce* them [as terms] in a figure of proportion when they are already making the exchange (my emphasis).

T4b. δοκεῖ τε ἡ εὐδαιμονία ἐν τῇ σχολῇ εἶναι· ἀσχολούμεθα γὰρ ἵνα σχολάζωμεν, καὶ πολεμοῦμεν ἵν' εἰρήνην ἄγωμεν (NE 1177b4-6, my emphasis).

Again, happiness is thought to reside in leisure from business; for we busy ourselves in order to have leisure, and go to war in order to live at peace (my emphasis).

T5. οἱ μὲν οὖν εἰς ὄνειδος ἄγοντες αὐτὸ φιλαύτους καλοῦσι τοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ἀπονέμοντας τὸ πλεῖον ἐν χρήμασι καὶ τιμαῖς καὶ ἡδοναῖς ταῖς σωματικαῖς (NE 1168b15-17, my emphasis).

Now *those that make self-love grounds for reproach* call 'self-lovers' those who assign themselves the larger share where money, or honours, or bodily pleasures are concerned (my emphasis).

In all passages T2 (with the exception of T2i), the word “ἄγω” is used to refer to the main inner factor that makes individuals act in a certain way. Pleasure, affections, and appetite are said to “guide”, “drive”, and “lead” actions. Passage T2i, in turn, might arguably be read as suggesting the interference of someone to draw the “slaves of pleasure” in a different direction. Of all the passages, passage T2i is closest to the idea of someone being guided by another to act in a certain way. Passages T3a and T3b also relate to the basic idea of guiding something. The former concerns the good realization of science, which is achieved by guiding its efforts (τὰ ἔργα) looking to the intermediate. The latter employs the verb “ἄγω” to refer to the pleasures involved in completing one’s own nature. This presupposes something being guided towards a certain end, that is, a process that is guided by the attainment of a certain target. In passage T4a, “ἄγω” has a more precise meaning, related to the introduction of terms in a figure of proportion. In passage T4b, the verb is part of a Greek expression: “εἰρήνην ἄγειν”. In the final passage T5, the verb is linked to the expression “εἰς ὄνειδος” and is irrelevant to the current discussion.

The several instances of the verb “ἄγω” from passages T2 and T3 make clear that the verb’s main use in the *NE* is tied to the core idea of guiding (or being guided) or leading (or being led). These general meanings lend themselves to more nuanced meanings depending on context. Given that this point is now well established, we have compelling textual evidence that the verb “ἄγω” is *not necessarily* related to upbringing in the *NE*. It is certainly a verb with many nuanced meanings, and upbringing is one among them. But the verb’s relation to the idea of upbringing is not as evident as we might have thought at first or as has been widely suggested by several interpreters. For that reason, this association should not be taken for granted.

Despite all the evidence presented, my argument remains open to an important objection. Someone might rightly point out that nothing prevents the verb from being understood to have the more specific meaning of upbringing in *NE* I.4. There, it conveys the idea of having been guided in good moral habits in childhood. This objection is not trivial and should be addressed with care.

This objection has two interpretative fronts. One front is philological. Its strategy is invoking usage, semantics, and grammar to prove that the verb “ἄγω” in *NE* I.4 invokes the idea of upbringing. The other is the philosophical argument that, given Aristotle’s views and claims about habituation and audience in the *NE*, it should not come as a surprise the fact that the verb “ἄγω” is taken in terms of upbringing, as suggested by several interpreters. I will challenge the latter front in the next sections. Regarding the former, I will now provide further arguments to show that Aristotle’s usage of the verb “ἄγω” and also of the cognate noun “ἀγωγή” in the *NE* does not support this position.

Against those who still insist that the translation of “ἄγω” with the English verb “bring someone up” is not completely discarded because it is plausible that this is the verb’s meaning in *NE* 1.4, I reply that Aristotle deliberately alerts the reader when he uses the verb “ἄγω” to introduce the idea of upbringing. In my view, Aristotle uses “ἄγω” in the *NE* judiciously. When he wants to leave no doubt that what is under discussion is upbringing, he adds to the verb “ἄγω”, and also to its cognate word “ἀγωγή”, the expression “ἐκ νέου/νέων”. The grammatical construction “ἄγω” together with “ἐκ νέου/νέων” is found in one passage from the *NE*:

T6. διὸ δεῖ ἡχθαί πως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὥστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν (*NE* 1104b11-13).
This is why we must have been brought up in a certain way from the childhood onwards, as Plato says, so as to delight in and be distressed by the things we should; this is the right education⁵⁶.

A similar construction is found in a passage where Aristotle employs the noun “ἀγωγή” with the expression “ἐκ νέου”:

T7. ἐκ νέου δ' ἀγωγῆς ὀρθῆς τυχεῖν πρὸς ἀρετὴν χαλεπὸν μὴ ὑπὸ τοιούτοις τραφέντα νόμοις (*NE* 1179b31-32).
But it is hard for someone to get the correct guidance towards virtue, from childhood on, if he has not been brought up under laws that aim at that effect.

These two passages are important because they show uses of the verb “ἄγω” and the noun “ἀγωγή”⁵⁷ which have crucial implications for the discussion at hand. These passages have an important implication against the upbringing assumption: if either of these words was undoubtedly used to introduce the idea of upbringing, the expression “ἐκ νέου/νέων” would be completely unnecessary. Given all the textual evidence I have provided so far, it seems beyond dispute that, alone and without contextual support, the verb “ἄγω” and its cognate noun “ἀγωγή” do not introduce the

⁵⁶ As this passage and the next might be taken as evidence supporting the upbringing assumption, they will be discussed carefully in the next sections, where I offer an interpretation of them which is compatible with my claims.

⁵⁷ Passage T7 is the only occurrence of the word “ἀγωγή” in the entire *NE*. In the *EE*, this word occurs twice. The first is in *EE* 1215a32-33, where Aristotle states: “there are three things that rank as conducive to happiness” (τῶν δ' εἰς ἀγωγὴν εὐδαιμονικὴν ταυτομένων τριῶν ὄντων) (Inwood and Woolf’s translation). The word basically refers to the three candidates described as promoting *eudaimonia* and, for that reason, taken to be potentially conducive to *eudaimonia*. The second occurrence is the following: “character exists, as the name signifies, because it develops from habit, and a thing gets habituated as a result of being led that is not innate, by repeated movement of one sort or another, so that it is eventually capable of being active in that way” (ἐπεὶ δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἦθος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα σημαίνει ὅτι ἀπὸ ἔθους ἔχει τὴν ἐπίδοσιν, ἐθίζεται δὲ τὸ ὑπ' ἀγωγῆς μὴ ἐμφύτου τῷ πολλάκις κινεῖσθαι πῶς, οὕτως ἤδη τὸ ἐνεργητικόν, ὃ ἐν τοῖς ἀψύχοις οὐχ ὀρθῶμεν) (*EE* 1220a39-b3, Inwood and Woolf’s translation, slightly changed). Interestingly, in this passage, the word “ἀγωγή” plays a part in Aristotle’s description of the acquisition of virtue in the *EE*. Habituation is characterized as being led in a certain way, but which one is not born with. It is noteworthy that, in the *EE*, Aristotle does not introduce any element that might restrict habituation to the idea of upbringing or set upbringing as the background to the discussion of habituation. Below, I intend to show that the role of upbringing in the discussion of habituation is only controversial in the *NE*. A detailed discussion about the philological aspects of *EE* 1220a39-b3 is found in Ferreira 2017.

idea of upbringing in the *NE*. When upbringing is at issue, Aristotle deliberately combines the verb “ἄγω” or the noun “ἀγωγή” with the expression “ἐκ νέου/νέων”.

Another piece of evidence in favour of my claim is that, in his first discussion about the profile of the students of ethics in *NE* I.3, 1095a2-11, Aristotle does not establish a good upbringing as a necessary requirement for attending his lessons. In that chapter, he writes:

T8. διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατῆς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ' ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων· ἔτι δὲ τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκολουθητικὸς ὢν ματαίως ἀκούσεται καὶ ἀνωφελῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνώσις ἀλλὰ πράξις, διαφέρει δ' οὐδὲν νέος τὴν ἡλικίαν ἢ τὸ ἦθος νεαρός· οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὸν χρόνον ἡ ἔλλειψις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζῆν καὶ διώκειν ἕκαστα. τοῖς γὰρ τοιούτοις ἀνόνητος ἡ γνώσις γίνεται, καθάπερ τοῖς ἀκρατέσιν· τοῖς δὲ κατὰ λόγον τὰς ὀρέξεις ποιουμένοις καὶ πράττουσι πολυωφελὲς ἂν εἴη τὸ περὶ τούτων εἰδέναι (*NE* 1095a2-11).

This is why the young are not an appropriate audience for the political expert; for they are inexperienced in the actions that constitute life, and what is said will start from these and will be about these. What is more, because they have a tendency to be led by the emotions, it will be without point or use for them to listen, since the end is not knowing things but doing. Nor does it make any difference whether a person is young in years or immature in character, for the deficiency is not a matter of time, but the result of living by emotion and going after things in that way. For having knowledge turns out to be without benefit to such people, as it is to those who lack self-control; whereas for those who arrange their desires and act in accordance with reason, it will be of great use to know about these things.

In this passage, Aristotle gives two reasons why a young person (νέος) might not be the proper hearer of his lectures. The first refers to the young person's being inexperienced (ἄπειρος) in the actions of life (τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων), which means that young people do not possess the required knowledge to engage with the topics under discussion. The second reason refers to the emotional and affective condition of the young hearer. This second point is important to my argument⁵⁸. Aristotle adopts a broad meaning for the word “young”, taking it to refer to a certain way of behaving, rather than a certain age range. In this case, young people are all those who behave according to their emotions. For the hearer who follows his passions, who can either be *young in age* or *young in character*, the lectures will be useless because what is taught will not influence his moral actions. To avoid the uselessness of the lessons, Aristotle demands that the hearer has been well trained concerning his emotions, in particular that their emotions are in accordance with reason.

The fundamental importance of Aristotle's requirement concerning the emotional and affective condition to my argument is that it does not imply that only those who have had a good upbringing are able to follow reason in their actions. Nor does this requirement exclude the possibility that a later training of character might lead to the development of this emotional and affective

⁵⁸ Regarding the first point, see Jimenez's insightful account (2019, 363-389) of the role of *empeiria* in the acquisition of *phronesis*.

condition. Aristotle claims that the lessons will be profitable to “those who arrange their desires and act in accordance with reason” (τοῖς δὲ κατὰ λόγον τὰς ὀρέξεις ποιούμενοις καὶ πράττουσι), but he expresses no opinion about how one might gain the ability to act in this way, nor about how it might be restricted to well-brought-up people only. We know only that those *young in age* have a tendency to act contrary to reason and according to their emotions, and the same is true of those *young in character*. For this reason, neither are proper hearers of Aristotle’s lessons. However, the passage does not mandate excluding from the lessons “those who arrange their desires and act in accordance with reason” based on a capacity developed through training of their emotional and affective dispositions received later in life, despite not having had a good upbringing. The passage above provides no textual basis for arguing that the good emotional and affective disposition which Aristotle requires of his students is attained only through a good upbringing. He clearly requires that his students “desire and act in accordance with reason”. However, he leaves open the possibility of this condition being acquired after the phase of upbringing.

A passage from Aristotle’s corpus that confirms my view is found in the *Cat.*, where the verb “ἄγω” is used as I have proposed. In the passage below, Aristotle is concerned with contraries. As examples of contraries, he offers the opposition between the bad (φαῦλος) and the good person (σπουδαῖος). He discusses the process by which the first disposition transitions to the second. To refer to this process of transition, which is fundamentally a change of character, Aristotle uses the verb “ἄγω”:

T9. ἔτι ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἐναντίων ὑπάρχοντος τοῦ δεκτικοῦ δυνατὸν εἰς ἄλληλα μεταβολὴν γενέσθαι, εἰ μὴ τι φέσει τὸ ἐν ὑπάρχει, οἷον τῷ πυρὶ τὸ θερμῷ εἶναι· καὶ γὰρ τὸ ὑγιαῖνον δυνατὸν νοσηῖσαι καὶ τὸ λευκὸν μέλαν γενέσθαι καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν θερμὸν, καὶ ἐκ σπουδαίου γε φαῦλον καὶ ἐκ φαύλου σπουδαῖον δυνατὸν γενέσθαι· ὁ γὰρ φαῦλος εἰς βελτίους διατριβὰς ἀγόμενος καὶ λόγους κἂν μικρὸν γέ τι ἐπιδοίη εἰς τὸ βελτίω εἶναι· ἐὰν δὲ ἅπαξ κἂν μικρὰν ἐπίδοσιν λάβῃ, φανερόν ὅτι ἢ τελείως ἂν μεταβάλοι ἢ πάνυ πολλὴν ἂν ἐπίδοσιν λάβῃ· αἰεὶ γὰρ εὐκίνητοτερος πρὸς ἀρετὴν γίγνεται, κἂν ἡντινοῦν ἐπίδοσιν εἰληφῶς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἢ, ὥστε καὶ πλείω εἰκὸς ἐπίδοσιν λαμβάνειν· καὶ τοῦτο αἰεὶ γιγνόμενον τελείως εἰς τὴν ἐναντίαν ἕξιν ἀποκαθίστησιν, ἐάνπερ μὴ χρόνῳ ἐξείργηται (*Cat.* 13a18-31, my emphasis).

Of contraries this, too, holds good, that, the subject remaining identical, either may change to the other, unless, indeed, one of those contraries constitutes part of that subject, as heat constitutes part of fire. What is healthy may well become sick, what is white may in time become black, what is cold may in turn become hot. And the good becomes bad, the bad good. For the *bad man*, when once *guided* to new modes both of living and thinking, may improve, be it ever so little. And should such a man once improve, even though it be only a little, he might, it is clear, make great progress or even, indeed, change completely. For ever more easily moved and inclined is a man towards virtue, although in the very first instance he made very little improvement. We naturally, therefore, conclude he will make ever greater advance. And, if so, as the process continues, it will at length change him entirely, provided that time is allowed (Cook’s translation, slightly changed)⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ One might object that the *Cat.* is a problematic text to exegetically ground the view that Aristotle is prone to accept the possibility of a change of character. According to this objection, if character change is possible, the book would end up defending opposing claims. This concern is based on the fact that, in *Cat.* 8, Aristotle apparently defends the impossibility of changing a disposition (ἕξις) and, for him, character is a disposition. However, I see no

This passage clearly exemplifies the fact that Aristotle does not see the verb “ἄγω” as necessarily implying the idea of upbringing, even when it is employed in a discussion about character and moral disposition. If we do not take the verb “ἄγω” to be bound to upbringing, it is unsurprising that Aristotle employs the verb “ἄγω” in its form “ἀγόμενος” to discuss the moral training of someone who already has a consolidated bad character (φαῦλος)⁶⁰ and who undergoes a process of change to become good (σπουδαῖος). By using the verb in this way, Aristotle recognizes that even this kind of person may pass through moral training and be led to better ways of living. As far as I can tell, it is totally inadequate to suggest that this training is necessarily upbringing: upbringing involves the initial formation of character, whereas the passage concerns someone who already has a consolidated character and the opportunity to change it⁶¹. Given the textual evidence and Aristotle’s use of the verb “ἄγω”, we have another reason to be sceptical of taking for granted that “ἄγω” along with its cognate “ἀγωγὴ” are associated with upbringing. This association should be recognized only when Aristotle explicitly acknowledged it, as is the case when he employs either the verb “ἄγω” or the noun “ἀγωγὴ” together with the expression “ἐκ νέου/νέων”⁶².

reason to take this chapter to ascribe that claim to Aristotle. There, Aristotle establishes the distinction between disposition (ἕξις) and condition (διάθεσις) by saying that the former is a quality (ποιότης) which is more stable than the latter (μονιμώτερον and πολυχρονιώτερον) (*Cat.* 8b28). He considers knowledge and virtues to be cases of ἕξις (*Cat.* 8b29). It seems to me that Aristotle’s granting this greater stability to the disposition (ἕξις) does not amount to the complete impossibility of change. After all, the stability proposed is not absolute. Aristotle describes knowledge as a disposition which is hard to change (δυσκίνητος) (*Cat.* 8b30) and virtues as not easy to change (οὐκ εὐκίνητον) (*Cat.* 8b34). Furthermore, in one of his last statements about the difference between a condition (διάθεσις) and a disposition (ἕξις), Aristotle sums up the distinction between them by saying that the disposition (ἕξις) is more lasting (πολυχρονιώτερον) and harder to change (δυσκίνητοτερον) than the condition (διάθεσις) (*Cat.* 9a8-10). The stability of the disposition (ἕξις) ensures that its eventual change is neither easy nor instantaneous. Aristotle lists heat and cold as examples of conditions (διαθέσεις) (*Cat.* 8b36), shedding light by contrast on the kind of stability he has in mind. The stability of both examples is rather precarious and might be easily lost. The term “ἕξις” introduces a kind of quality (ποιότης) that is not easily subject to change but may change granted certain conditions (*Cat.* 8b31-32). For an interpretation along the same lines, see Cooper 2012, p. 407-408; Hobuss 2013, p. 307. Additionally, note that in passage T9, Aristotle portrays the change from a bad character to a good one as “εἰς τὴν ἐναντίαν ἕξιν ἀποκαθίστησιν”. This may be seen as evidence in favour of the claim that a ἕξις may change. I am indebted to Christof Rapp for his pressing questions on this topic.

⁶⁰ Passages in the *NE* where the word “φαῦλος” means a bad individual include: 1104b21, 1113a25, 1154b15, and 1166b25. Examples of the same in the *EE* include: 1219b18, 1237b27, 1238a33, 1238b2, and 1238b5.

⁶¹ In footnote 54, I have described my understanding of what is behind the verb “ἄγω” in terms of moral training.

⁶² One may object that the verb “ἄγω” in the passage T1 should be translated by the English verb “to bring someone up” because the verb “ἄγω” is in the infinitive perfect (ἤχθαι). This verbal form may be taken to indicate that Aristotle has in mind the conclusion of the moral education, to be understood as the end of the initial formation of character, that is, the end of upbringing. However, I think that Aristotle employs the infinitive perfect for a different reason. By using it, Aristotle demands that his students have been *already* guided in good habits when the lessons start. The conclusion of a training in good habits is not the same as the conclusion of a good upbringing. A training in good habits is consistent with the possibility of acquiring good moral habits after one has come of age. The verbal form “ἤχθαι” in passage T1 introduces the idea of a moral education in good habits that has already reached a point at which the next stage can start. In other words, the verbal form indicates that moral progress has already reached a state or condition that is reliable enough to move on from. Here, Aristotle employs what Gildersleeve classifies as the perfect of maintenance of result (1900, p. 99). Throughout his work, Aristotle employs the verbal form “ἤχθαι” only three times and there is no evidence to indicate that his use of this form is necessarily related to upbringing. Two of these occurrences are found in passages T1 and T6. The third occurrence of the form “ἤχθαι” is

The evidence I have discussed so far strongly suggests that Aristotle did not restrict his lessons to those who had received a good upbringing. Instead, he intended them to address all those who had the opportunity to be correctly trained and led in good habits, regardless of the point of their lives at which this training occurred, and who were able to rely on those habits in their daily moral choices. If my interpretation is correct, *NE* I.4 does not offer decisive support for the view that only well-brought-up students are able to take advantage of Aristotle's lessons. From his students, Aristotle demands training of character, which should not be confused with upbringing. A major implication of this less demanding view is that it undermines one of the traditional arguments in favour of taking the notion of upbringing to underlie the discussion of habituation in the initial chapters of *NE* II. As a result, the view affords the possibility of an interpretation of these chapters which is not committed to the upbringing assumption⁶³.

2.5. Habituation and Upbringing in *NE* II: two different questions

In the previous section, I argued that there are two fronts to the objection which alleges that the verb “ἄγω” might have the technical meaning of upbringing in *NE* I.4. One front concerns the philological aspect of the Greek verb. As I hope to have demonstrated, philological arguments offer no ground for introducing the notion of upbringing in that passage. Neither the core meaning of the verb nor Aristotle's usage provide philological grounds for the traditional interpretation. Another front concerns the philosophical motivations that have led several interpreters to endorse the upbringing assumption. The philosophical front is harder to undermine because it turns on discerning and analysing the underlying goals and purposes that guide Aristotle's discussion of habituation in *NE* II.

In what follows, I will propose that we may better understand the discussion of habituation and, moreover, avoid confusing two distinct questions to which Aristotle gives different an-

in the *Pol.*, where Aristotle writes that: “for the harmony between those [reason and habits] should be the best kind of harmony. For it is possible for someone's reason to have missed the best supposition and for him to be led similarly astray by his habits” (ταῦτα γὰρ δεῖ πρὸς ἄλληλα συμφωνεῖν συμφωνίαν τὴν ἀρίστην· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ διημαρτηκέναι τὸν λόγον τῆς βελτίστης ὑποθέσεως, καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐθῶν ὁμοίως ἴχθαι) (*Pol.* 1334b9-12, Reeve's translation). Here, the use of the form “ἴχθαι” resembles that of all passages T2. Aristotle refers to inner sources of motivation in the human beings, reason and habits, which lead them to act in a certain way. I am thankful to Carol Attack and Paulo Ferreira for calling my attention to these issues.

⁶³ Although the passage from the *Cat.* assumes that change of character is a real possibility, this is a *vexata quaestio* in the *NE*. Indeed, certain passages seem, at first glance, to contradict it (*NE* 1114a9-21, 1129a11-15, and 1152a32-33). To address philosophical and interpretative issues related to determinism of character in the *NE* is a task beyond the scope of this thesis. However, my claims have an impact on this debate. If my arguments against the upbringing assumption are correct, Aristotle did not regard a change of character as impossible. My discussion of the initial chapters of *NE* II will show that Aristotle is sympathetic to the idea of change of character already in his discussion of habituation. For a defence of a determinist approach, see Furley 1977. For a historical overview of the issue, see Hobuss 2013.

swers by introducing a distinction between the necessary and optimal conditions for acquiring virtue of character.

Certain initial remarks are important to highlight aspects of the early chapters of *NE* II which are not fully considered in the debate. A conspicuous feature of Aristotle's approach to habituation in the *NE* is that habituation is not intrinsically formulated in terms of upbringing nor discussed in a context where what is under scrutiny is the sort of moral education which should be provided during childhood. We see this sort of discussion when we turn our attention, for instance, to the two last books of *Pol*.

Broadly speaking, in the *NE* Aristotle seems to be mostly interested in what makes someone acquire a virtuous character. To put the point differently, Aristotle is seeking how a person develops a virtuous character. Yet, depending on how we understand this investigative aim, different and potentially conflicting interpretations emerge. How we understand this aim opens up two interpretative possibilities that should not be confused with each other, because they draw completely different philosophical implications for Aristotle's views on moral education.

One possible interpretation of habituation is to assume that Aristotle is asking for the optimal conditions that can be available to someone for him to acquire virtue of character. Another possibility is to assume a deflationary interpretation, in which Aristotle is asking for the minimum conditions that any individual must meet to acquire virtue of character. If Aristotle's interest in *NE* II concerns the former question, a good upbringing is certainly included among the requirements for acquiring a good character. It is hardly open to doubt that a process of habituation starting in childhood is a much more promising route to virtue and may be rightly called the best scenario in comparison to the habituation of someone who already has certain ingrained patterns of bad behaviour. However, on the other hand, if Aristotle's primary interest is not in the optimal developmental conditions but merely in the minimum conditions, there is no need to smuggle the notion of upbringing into the discussion of habituation. In this case, introducing upbringing into the discussion would be required only if upbringing were among the necessary requirements for the acquisition of the virtue of character, or, in other words, only if it were impossible for there to be habituation which was not upbringing. As I have been arguing so far, these two notions should be kept apart. It is more philosophically fruitful not to confine habituation to upbringing. Unless these two notions are kept apart, one will end up restricting the possibility of moral education to childhood and make moral reform impossible. In my view, we should permit habituation a much broader scope than it is usually afforded by the traditional interpretation.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that, even though I will argue that Aristotle is not relying on the optimal conditions that might be available for someone to become virtuous in *NE*

II, this does not imply that he does not hold certain views and make certain claims about these optimal conditions. I will also argue that there is textual evidence of his views and claims on this issue.

If habituation cannot be exclusively formulated in terms of upbringing and Aristotle does not establish that these two notions are interchangeable, what textual evidence has contributed to their widespread association in *NE II*?⁶⁴ To the best of my knowledge, three passages from the initial chapters of *NE II* may serve as evidence for the upbringing assumption (*NE* 1103b23-25, 1104b11-13, and 1105a1-3). In these passages, Aristotle touches upon the topic of upbringing. However, I do not consider these three passages to constitute conclusive evidence for the upbringing assumption.

In the following passages, Aristotle highlights the importance of a moral training that begins in childhood:

T10. οὐ μικρὸν οὖν διαφέρει τὸ οὕτως ἢ οὕτως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων ἐθίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πάμπλου, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πᾶν (*NE* 1103b23-25).

So it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or in another way from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather, it makes all the difference.

T6. διὸ δεῖ ἡχθαί πως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὥστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἢ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν (*NE* 1104b11-13).

This is why we must have been trained in a certain way from childhood onwards, as Plato says, so as to delight in and be distressed by the things we should; this is what the right education is.

T11. ἔτι δ' ἐκ νηπίου πᾶσιν ἡμῖν συντέθραπται· διὸ χαλεπὸν ἀποτριβασθαι τοῦτο τὸ πάθος ἐγκεχρωσμένον τῷ βίῳ (*NE* 1105a1-3).

Again, pleasure is something we have all grown up with since infancy; the result is that it is hard to rub us clean of this impulse, dyed as it is into our lives.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Whereas Frede rightly calls our attention to the fact that Aristotle did not spell out how habituation should work, she leaves the association between habituation and childhood unquestioned: “Aristotle makes clear right from the start that the virtues of character are [...] acquired by habituation from early on” (Frede 2013, p. 22). In criticizing interpretations which do not adequately explain the continuity of motivation in the transition from actions performed by learners to those performed by virtuous individuals, Jimenez affirms that these interpretations “creates a moral upbringing gap” (Jimenez 2016, p. 24). It is an interesting testament to the force of the upbringing assumption that, in her formulation of the problem, she takes for granted that habituation is to be thought of in terms of upbringing. Moss also expresses a restrictive view of habituation: “Aristotle’s claim is that while we can reason about how to live or what to care about, given a set of ultimate values, those ultimate values are fixed and determined by our upbringings – that is, by the affective, evaluative dispositions that our upbringings produce: our characters” (Moss 2012, p. 197) and “the content of one’s ends – the nature of the things one values – is dictated entirely by one’s nonrational upbringing and character” (Moss 2014, p. 234; see also p. 233, 239). In a similar way, Bernard Williams seems to portray Aristotle as limiting the consolidation of a character to the process of upbringing in his essay *Foundations: Well-Being* (2006, p. 44). McDowell’s approach in the paper *Two Sorts of Naturalism* also presupposes the upbringing assumption (1998a, p. 174, 189, 197). Curzer points out that only well-brought-up people may make moral progress through teaching and arguments, and thereby to become properly virtuous (2012, p. 13). Kristjánsson articulates explicitly how the upbringing assumption leads to a restrictive view of the possibility of moral development: “correct upbringing is vital here. Those who have not been reared in good habits — who have not been sensitised properly — will never be able to reach the stage of full virtue” (2013, p. 432).

⁶⁵ The order of the passages follows their order of appearance in *NE II*.

Passages T10, T6, and T11 are found in the opening chapters of *NE II*. These chapters are devoted to the acquisition of virtue of character. In my view, we may accept from the outset that, in these passages, Aristotle clearly entertains some ideas about upbringing and, moreover, he sees upbringing as providing a very promising contribution to the acquisition of a virtuous character. From the scattered pieces of evidence above, however, we should not jump to the conclusion that habituation is to be conceived of in terms of upbringing. Instead, we must carefully approach this claim, especially because the investigation into habituation in *NE II* shows no sign of being carried out within a discussion about the upbringing and moral education which takes place in childhood. Additionally, as I have already shown in the previous sections, cogent arguments indicate that, already in *NE I.4*, Aristotle rejects the possibility of taking the training of character to be possible only during upbringing. For these reasons, it is exegetically advisable to endorse an account of habituation that does not restrict this notion to upbringing. If, in our interpretation of *NE II*, we take for granted the upbringing assumption, Aristotle will be likely accused of incoherence. Therefore, I think that we should look carefully at the quoted passages and show how they can be made coherent with the results of the previous sections.

As I have already said, one way to interpret these passages is to understand them all as though Aristotle meant to support the claim that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for a good character. Unless this condition is met, any effort to make people acquire virtue of character is in vain. It seems undeniable to me that a good upbringing might play an important role in one's moral training by providing the conditions which make the aim of acquiring virtue of character more easily achieved. Thanks to a good upbringing, people may incorporate virtuous patterns of behaviour and internalize virtuous values in their daily choices from very early on in their lives. However, accepting this philosophical view is completely different from endorsing the stronger claim that a good upbringing is a necessary condition for virtue. It is one thing to say that a good upbringing might contribute to the acquisition of a good character, but it is quite another to maintain that, without a good upbringing, it is impossible to acquire a good character⁶⁶. In my discussion of the passages T10, T6, and T11 below, I show this distinction at work:

⁶⁶ In one of his formulations of this point, Vasiliou argues that only a new upbringing has the power to make someone change his behaviour: "we could only 'save' the vicious man by giving him a new upbringing so that he comes to see the world aright" (1996, p. 793). As nobody may have more than one upbringing in life, it follows that, according to this formulation, upbringing sets an individual's character once and for all. Later in the paper, Vasiliou attempts to give a more elaborate view of what it means to be a well-brought-up individual. He argues that it is not a "stringent condition". He leaves room for conceiving of a good upbringing as coming in degrees. According to this view, only the person who falls completely short of having been well brought up at all cannot undergo a moral reform (1996, p. 794).

T10. οὐ μικρὸν οὖν διαφέρει τὸ οὕτως ἢ οὕτως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων ἐθίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πάμπλου, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πᾶν (*NE* II.1, 1103b23-25).
So it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or in another way from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather, it makes all the difference⁶⁷.

This passage consists of Aristotle's closing remarks in the first chapter of book II. Notably, it is only in these closing remarks – nowhere else in the chapter – that he suggests an association between habituation and upbringing. In the discussion about the intricacies of habituation, including its power to instil virtue and the features it shares with the acquisition of craftsmanship (*NE* 1103a19-b23), Aristotle shows no concern about the profile or background of the person undergoing the habituation process and does not restrict habituation to moral training during childhood. Given the chapter's overall context, that the idea of upbringing is introduced only in the closing remarks suggests that it is more like a noteworthy afterthought than a view that is deeply interwoven in the account of habituation. If Aristotle intended to conceive of habituation in terms of upbringing, the notion of upbringing would have appeared earlier in the text and would have played a crucial role in the investigation of habituation throughout *NE* II.1. But, instead, the topic of upbringing plays a peripheral role in the discussion of habituation. That role seems incompatible with the philosophical implications drawn by several interpreters from habituation to upbringing.

However, my view is open to some pressing questions. Someone might ask: why did Aristotle consider it important to make this remark at the end of *NE* II.1? Should we not take seriously Aristotle's apparent intention to claim that his thinking about habituation is in terms of upbringing? I think that it is not hard to find a plausible answer to these questions. In my view, the idea of upbringing expressed by passage T10 is more limited than we are initially inclined to admit⁶⁸. Plausibly, we might interpret the passage as Aristotle's intention to emphasize the positive impact of a good upbringing on the acquisition of a good character. The task of ridding oneself of corrupted emotions and censurable moral values which are ingrained in one's character demands effort and time. A good upbringing permits one to avoid this situation, and to pass through a less troublesome moral development to acquire virtue of character. This might explain Aristotle's strong emphasis on the positive role that an early training of character has in the moral development, and his glowing recommendations of it as making all the difference. Interpreted in this way, passage T10 recognizes the importance of a good upbringing. More importantly, it does so without supporting the upbringing assumption.

Let's move on to the next passage:

⁶⁷ I quote again the passages for ease of reading.

⁶⁸ On Vasiliou's view (1996, p. 793 n. 50), the passage lends support to the claim that upbringing definitely shapes someone's character.

T6. διὸ δεῖ ἤχθαι πως εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὅστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ· ἢ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν (*NE* 1104b11-13).

This is why we must have been trained in a certain way from childhood onwards, as Plato says, so as to delight in and be distressed by the things we should; this is what the right education is.

As in T10, there is reasonable room for defending an interpretation of T6 which does not suggest the upbringing assumption. Once again, Aristotle mentions upbringing in the middle of a discussion that is neither focused on nor related to it. Passage T6 occurs in the context of a discussion of the role of pleasure and pain in the moral training of character. In the passage, Aristotle recalls Plato's claim that, since childhood, we must be trained to be pleased and distressed by the right things. An interpretation which supports the upbringing assumption posits that, in this passage, Aristotle invokes Plato's statement to support the claim that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of the virtue of character⁶⁹. In other words, the passage is taken to advance the strong claim that Aristotle restricts habituation's power to shape someone's behaviours and character traits to the initial formation of character, that is, to upbringing⁷⁰. A person who did not have a good upbringing finds his path to the virtue of character permanently closed. This interpretation of passage T6 poses a serious challenge to the view I have defended. However, even though, *prima facie*, the passage seems to be irrevocably committed to the upbringing assumption, there are other ways that it may be interpreted.

It seems to me that the biggest interpretative difficulty related to passage T6 consists in establishing the exact point which Aristotle is making. Is the passage unquestionably introducing a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a virtuous character, as the upbringing assumption suggests? In what follows, I resist the affirmative answer to this question.

First, we must determine what exactly is at issue when Aristotle discusses about the relation between a good upbringing and the acquisition of virtue of character. Contextual aspects which have a decisive impact on our understanding of passage T6 must not be overlooked. We must have a clear answer to this fundamental question: *for what* and *in which condition* is a good upbringing necessary? The upbringing assumption suggests that the passage advances the restrictive view that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for anyone to acquire the virtue of character *in any given condition*. So, failure to fulfil this requirement makes impossible to acquire virtue of character. Anyone who did not have a good upbringing is inevitably a lost cause. However, I think

⁶⁹ Hampson (2019, p. 315) seems to take passage T6 to imply more than a recommendation about how to best implement a successful habituation.

⁷⁰ Sherman construes the concept of habituation as strongly associated with upbringing. She twice uses passage T6 to support her view (1989, p. 166, 190).

that there is an alternative interpretation to the passage, which avoids the philosophical burden of the upbringing assumption.

In passage T6, Aristotle calls a good upbringing regarding pleasure and pain the right education (ὀρθὴ παιδεία). This is an important remark. In my view, this is Aristotle's way of indicating that he is *not* interested in the more basic question of what are the necessary requirements for acquiring virtue of character *in any given condition*. Rather, in the passage, Aristotle intends a different answer for the question "*in which condition?*" He seems to be interested in making some remarks about what he considers *the most suitable way* to promote a good education of character. To put my view differently, under discussion are his views about the most opportune manner of instilling a virtuous character. On this interpretation, the idea of necessary requirement suggested by Aristotle's use of the verb "δεῖ" in the passage *is not* understood as introducing upbringing as a necessary requirement for the acquisition of virtue of character *in any given condition*. Rather, he means to describe it as a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue *in the most suitable condition*. So, *without further qualifications*, a good upbringing *must not* be taken as a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a virtuous character. Rather, a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of virtue of character only when Aristotle has in view the right education. However, it should not be taken as the only way of acquiring virtue of character. It is merely the best way of achieving a virtuous disposition of character.

An example from *Met.* and *PA* better illustrates my point. In the discussion of necessity in both books, Aristotle introduces nourishment as an example of something without which a living being cannot exist (*Met.* V.5, 1015a20-22; *PA* I.1, 642a7). For the maintenance of life, it is necessary to be nourished, at least from time to time. But note that nourishment is *not only* among the necessary requirements for living *but also* among the necessary requirements for good living. It is virtually impossible for an individual to have a good life when his existence is frequently threatened by malnutrition and he must devote most of his time to satisfy his basic needs. But, when we shift the focus of our discussion from merely living to good living, we must add more necessary requirements. In a good life, for instance, it is not only necessary to be regularly nourished, but also to be *properly* nourished, and to exercise the virtue of temperance towards food (*NE* 1118a24-b7). This example helps our discussion about upbringing. In passage T6, Aristotle does not discuss the strictly necessary conditions for the acquisition of a virtuous character. That is, he is not interested in that without which virtue of character does not, and could not, come about. Recall that the expression "ὀρθὴ παιδεία" indicates that the aim presupposed in the statement about the necessity of a good upbringing regarding pleasure and pain is not merely to acquire virtue of character but to acquire it in the best way. For this reason, the good upbringing requirement demanded in this

passage should not be regarded as strictly necessary for the acquisition of a virtuous character *in any given condition*. A good upbringing regarding pleasure and pain is necessary for the acquisition of a virtuous character only when the discussion is about achieving a virtuous character through the most suitable way, in the best way.

This interpretation offers us a less restrictive view of T6. According to it, a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for virtue of character *but only* under the aforementioned condition. On my approach, the passage offers a recommendation about the best time for shaping character towards virtue through habituation. It does not introduce the stronger view that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue of character in any given condition⁷¹.

Now the last sentence in the investigation into habituation that touches upon the idea of upbringing:

T11. ἔτι δ' ἐκ νηπίου πᾶσιν ἡμῖν συντέθραπται: διὸ χαλεπὸν ἀποτρίψασθαι τοῦτο τὸ πάθος ἐγκεχρωσμένον τῷ βίῳ (NE 1105a1-3).

Again, pleasure is something we have all grown up with since infancy; the result is that it is hard to rub us clean of this impulse, dyed as it is into our lives.

Like passage T6, passage T11 occurs in a chapter in which Aristotle insists on the importance of pleasure and pain in the moral training of character. In this chapter, Aristotle emphasizes how virtue of character is related with pleasures and pains (NE 1104b8-9, b10-12). In passage T11, Aristotle calls attention to the fact that pleasure is embedded in us since childhood. By this, he means that we grow up having a close relationship with pleasure. How we behave regarding pleasures significantly impacts the acquisition of virtue of character (NE 1104b27-28). Interpreted in light of the upbringing assumption, the passage T11 is seen as evidence suggesting that the education concerning pleasures that we receive in childhood determines our behaviour in such a way that it is impossible to change how we behave towards pleasures afterwards. On this interpretation, the initial moments of our character formation, that is, upbringing, has the exclusive power to shape our tendencies towards pleasure. However, I urge a different interpretation of this passage. Given all the evidence gathered so far, there is no reason to introduce here any deterministic view about the impacts of upbringing about pleasures on the moral life of an adult individual. The passage says that it is hard (χαλεπὸν) to get rid of the pleasures ingrained in our lives, which does not amount to saying that it is impossible. Reshaping patterns of behaviour is certainly a long, difficult process of re-habituating oneself to modify the ingrained pleasure habits. The difficulty of this process is the reason why it is of the utmost importance to begin training of character early in life. It makes a great differ-

⁷¹ I am deeply thankful to Lucas Angioni for discussing passage T6 in detail with me.

ence and certainly might be regarded as the right moral education. From these considerations, however, we should not jump to the conclusion that this is the only way of acquiring virtue of character.

I hope to have shown that the alternative interpretations of T6, T10, and T11 avoid burdening Aristotle with the upbringing assumption.

Besides all the arguments given, a compelling reason to keep the notion of habituation apart from the notion of upbringing still needs to be discussed. It comes from the *EE*. Like the *NE*, the *EE* also investigates habituation in its second book. But, unlike the *NE*, in the entire treatment of habituation in the *EE* it is practically impossible to find any piece of evidence that even suggests the possibility of conceiving of habituation within the limits of upbringing. Moreover, if habituation were intrinsically restricted to upbringing, we should expect upbringing to be introduced in the *EE* when Aristotle spells out the origin of character and elucidates what he means by habit and being habituated. But the text leaves that expectation unfulfilled:

T12. ἐστὶ τὸ ἥθος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα σημαίνει ὅτι ἀπὸ ἔθους ἔχει τὴν ἐπίδοσιν, ἐθίζεται δὲ τὸ ὑπ' ἀγωγῆς μὴ ἐμφύτου τῷ πολλακίς κινεῖσθαι πῶς, οὕτως ἤδη τὸ ἐνεργητικόν (*EE* 1220a39-b3).

Character exists, as the name signifies, because it develops from habit, and a thing gets habituated as a result of being led that is not innate, by repeated movement of one sort or another, so that it is eventually capable of being active in that way (Inwood and Woolf's translation, slightly changed).

The *EE*'s investigation into habituation constitutes a compelling piece of evidence for the claim that Aristotle *does not* conceive of habituation *necessarily* in terms of upbringing. Therefore, we must take a step back and be careful to avoid taking for granted the upbringing assumption concerning habituation in the *NE*⁷².

My argument does not presuppose any claim about the date of the composition of the books or about the reasons for their possibly divergent views⁷³. It hinges on a modest claim: in contrast to the *NE*, Aristotle clearly develops the notion of habituation without appealing to the notion

⁷² Devereux observes that, in the books that are exclusively to the *EE*, Aristotle makes no remark about the appropriate audience of his lessons. Devereux proposes that it is due to the methodological differences between the *EE* and *NE*. According to him, whereas the *NE* explicitly recognizes a link between character and evaluative beliefs, the *EE*'s investigative methodology is like that of the empirical science, in which empirical observations are independent from subjective evaluations (Devereux 2015, p. 130). Despite noting the *EE*'s lack of restrictions on the expected audience, Devereux draws no conclusion about the impact of that lack on claims related to habituation in the *EE*. Following the traditional interpretation, he reads *NE* I.4 as establishing that a good upbringing is required for virtue (2015, p. 145). He affirms that "people who have not had the right sort of upbringing will not be able to see that certain kinds of actions are valuable and worth performing" (Devereux 2015, p. 146; see also 147). As I have already shown, passage I.4, 1095b4–8, does not provide sufficient, decisive evidence to the upbringing assumption. Devereux's main claim could still be maintained if one accepts my view that Aristotle just requires some previous training of character, not upbringing. This training would suffice to change the moral evaluative beliefs so that the individual would become a proper hearer of Aristotle's lectures. The link between character and evaluative beliefs required for attending the lessons would remain untouched. The upbringing assumption introduces an extremely stringent requirement, which is both philosophically burdensome and exegetically avoidable. Devereux's interpretation does not need to foot this bill.

of upbringing in the *EE*. A persistent defence of the upbringing assumption in the interpretation of the *NE* would force the interpreter to assume that Aristotle defends different views of habituation in his two moral treatises, adopting a more restrictive view in the *NE*. If we accept the upbringing assumption, we must address the following question: why did Aristotle change his mind from one book to another? In my interpretation, this question does not even arise. It is founded on a questionable assumption made in the interpretation of the *NE*, which my interpretation does not make. I take the two moral treatises to hold the same view about habituation: neither one puts the notion of habituation within the limits imposed by the notion of upbringing. On my approach, the most relevant question is different: why did Aristotle introduce remarks about upbringing into the discussion about habituation in the *NE*? The answer lies in a peculiar feature of the *NE*. Unlike the *EE*, the *NE*'s closing chapter establishes a transition to the *Pol*. Moreover, Aristotle references the *Pol*. throughout the *NE* (for instance, *NE* 1094a24-b2, b10-11, 1102a7-26; X.9). The *NE*'s closing chapter offers valuable insights about why in the *NE* Aristotle calls attention to the importance of moral training during childhood. This chapter also enables us to establish a methodological difference between the *NE* and the *Pol*. regarding the treatment of habituation. This divergent treatment explains why the notion of upbringing has exerted a significant influence on the exegesis of the *NE*.

2.6. *Nicomachean Ethics and Politics: habituation in perspective*

The final chapter of the *NE* has been traditionally interpreted as lending support for the upbringing assumption⁷⁴. In fact, depending on how this chapter is understood, it may provide cogent reasons to accept that assumption. My interpretation of *NE* X.9 takes as its starting point an uncontroversial aspect of this chapter: it serves as a transition from the *NE* to the *Pol*. For this reason, I think that its arguments and views should be taken with a grain of salt.

The *NE* and the *Pol*. address the moral training of character from different perspectives. These perspectives are not incompatible, but they have non-trivial differences. The main reason for the distinction between them is the fact that each has different investigative goals. Therefore, it is important to be cautious and avoid a *prima-facie* interpretation of *NE* X.9, which tends to take the claims about upbringing in this chapter as if they were giving more details about the notion of habituation presented in *NE* II. As the *NE* and the *Pol*. approach habituation from different starting points, we should not take for granted that the two works provide a continuous and homogeneous account of habituation, or that the *Pol*.' account may be used without caveat to elucidate the details

⁷³ In regard to these issues, I am very sympathetic to Frede's claims, 2019. For a view that contrasts with hers, see Kenny 1978.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Irwin 1978, p. 256; Burnyeat 1980, p. 75 and 81; Sherman 1989, p. 165; Vasiliou 1996, p. 774; Smith 1994, p. 61.

of the notion of habituation from the *NE*. Furthermore, as *NE* X.9 is clearly a transition to the topics investigated in the *Pol.*, showing signs that it is already embedded in *Pol.*'s philosophical and investigative commitments to some extent, we must pay close attention to the implications of its claims for the understanding of the notion of habituation.

In a completely understandable attempt to flesh out the details of habituation in *NE* II, a common strategy is to see Aristotle in the *Pol.*'s two last books spelling out what is involved in a successful habituation, that is, how habituation should be conducted so that it may attain the goal of instilling a virtuous character. Recently, Hampson formulated the point like this: “where *NE* 2 offers an account in broad outline of how the moral virtues are acquired, the *Pol.* offers much more detail on what the learner’s habituation involves” (2019, p. 304). Undeniably, the account of habituation in the *Pol.* is much richer and more comprehensive than the one found in the *NE*. But before explaining the *NE* by means of the *Pol.*, we should take a step back and wonder how Aristotle intends the two treatments of the same topic to be related, and what might explain the differences between them⁷⁵. Without a clear view of these issues, any attempt to combine the two approaches will be misleading. Taking Aristotle’s account of habituation in the *Pol.* to flesh out his broad account from the *NE* without interpretative sensitivity to the goal of each investigation has the exegetical disadvantage of ignoring the fundamental question of why they differ.

2.7. *Politics* VII and VIII: upbringing and the project of the best possible education

In books VII and VIII, the *Pol.* investigates moral education with a primary focus on children’s moral development. From this, however, we should not jump to the conclusion that it supports the upbringing assumption in the *NE*. The dialogue between the two works demands some methodological caveats.

Although details of the *Pol.*'s aims and the order in which its books were composed are both matters of scholarly controversy, there is a wide consensus about one important aspect of books VII and VIII⁷⁶. It is basically a truism that the aim of these two books is to outline the fea-

⁷⁵ In her account of habituation and moral development, Sherman goes back and forth between the *Ethics*, both *EE* and *NE*, and the *Pol.* (1989, p. 97 n. 51, 98, 147, 161, 172, 177, 181-183, and 190). I intend to show the inconveniences of this strategy.

⁷⁶ It is widely agreed that Aristotle is ambivalent towards the primary goal of the *Pol.* Traditionally, that work’s books are divided into three blocks: I-III, IV-VI, and VII-VIII. The blocks composed of books I-III and VII-VIII are regarded as a continuous block that is intercalated by books IV-VI. Broadly speaking, the reason for this division is that, in the first block, Aristotle adopts an approach of conceptual and theoretical analysis, which attempts to delimit an optimal model of state, whereas the most salient feature of the second block is its more empirical approach. Jaeger (1948, p. 267-271) draws a distinction along these lines, except for the fact that he excludes book I from the first block of books (1948, 271-273). He calls the block composed of II-III and VII-VIII “the books containing the ideal state” (1948, p. 273; see also p. 275). Rowe partially maintains Jaeger’s division, even though he criticizes compellingly the grounds of the division provided by Jaeger’s genetic approach. Rowe proposes that the difference between the aims of books IV-VI and books VII-VIII is not to be explained in terms of a change of mind, but rather founded on a “fundamental ambivalence” between the two treatments. For him, Aristotle is at once committed to

tures of the best constitution (ἀρίστη πολιτεία). The concluding remarks of book III and the opening of book VII both reveal this aim:

T13. διορισμένων δὲ τούτων περὶ τῆς πολιτείας ἤδη πειρατέον λέγειν τῆς ἀρίστης, τίνα πέφυκε γίνεσθαι τρόπον καὶ καθίστασθαι πῶς (*Pol.* 1288b2-4).

Now that these matters have been determined, we must attempt to discuss the best constitution, the way it naturally arises and how it is established (Reeve's translation).

T14. περὶ δὲ πολιτείας ἀρίστης τὸν μέλλοντα ποιήσασθαι τὴν προσήκουσαν ζήτησιν ἀνάγκη διορίσασθαι πρῶτον τίς αἰρετώτατος βίος. ἀδήλου γὰρ ὄντος τούτου καὶ τὴν ἀρίστην ἀναγκαῖον ἀδήλον εἶναι πολιτείαν (*Pol.* 1323a14-17).

Anyone who intends to investigate the best constitution in the proper way must first determine which life is most choice worthy, since if this remains unclear, what the best constitution is must also remain unclear (Reeve's translation).

Part of the task of thinking about the best constitution involves investigating the sort of education that will be promoted in an ideal city. This leads Aristotle to lay down an educational program that begins early in childhood. This program presents a very demanding path to virtue. Aristotle describes the education of children in significant detail. He claims that the legislator should care about the education of the young (*Pol.* 1337a7-15). He proposes an early training of the body to endure the cold weather (*Pol.* 1336a12-23), and a childhood diet abundant in milk and with the smallest amount of wine (*Pol.* 1336a7-8). He expresses concerns about the kind of fables and stories that will be told to children (*Pol.* 1336a30-32). For him, leisure should be pursued away from slaves (*Pol.* 1336a39-41). The legislator should outlaw shameful talk, especially among children (*Pol.* 1336a39-41), and young people should be forbidden from attending comedies (*Pol.* 1336b20-23). Aristotle also outlines some cycles of education (*Pol.* 1336b37-1337a3). He encourages a discussion about whether education is to be established by the community or on an individual basis

the Platonic ideal of the σπουδαία πόλις and to the idea that πολιτική must say something useful. As Rowe affirms: "it must try to do what it can to help existing constitutions, and not satisfy itself with proposing to rub them out and start again" (1977, p. 172). In his view, books IV-VI have a reformist aim while books VII-VIII represent a "certainly ideal" (1977, p. 161) project of constitution. Miller also recognizes these two poles of tension within the *Pol.* One "ideal or Utopian" and the other "mundane or empirical" (1995, 186). Miller sees the latter as proposing a pragmatic approach, consisting of a reformist agenda that explores how existing political regimes may be improved (1995, p. 188-190). More recently, Miller again identifies the project of *Pol.* VII-VIII as aiming to characterise the ideal city-state (2009, p. 540), and shows how it takes as its starting point the best conditions to establish a political community: "it [the best possible city] would possess the most favourable resources, location, and a population with the appropriate size, natural aptitude, and class structure" (2009, p. 540). In a similar vein, Kraut says that Aristotle's task in books VII and VIII is "to present a detailed portrait of the best possible city" (2002, p. 192). Kraut emphasizes that this city contains no unachievable element, but its realization demands the combination of many favourable circumstances, some of them the result of good fortune (2002, p. 192-193). For him, the role of the best possible city is to provide "a guide to reform" the existing constitutions (2002, p. 193-194). In the same vein, Destrée calls the city sketched in books VII and VIII "best possible, ideal city" (2015, p. 204), emphasizing its "practical relevance". The ideal city offers the possibility of "reflecting on how to improve less than perfect cities" (2015, p. 209). The interpretation which I have been arguing for turns only on the uncontested point that the two last books of the *Pol.* were written with a view to the best possible conditions that can be available to a city. Granting this, the inevitable implication is that Aristotle's views about moral education described in these books are based on conditions that hardly ever present available in existing cities. If this is the only way to morally educate individuals through which virtue is achieved, Aristotle's virtuous individual becomes in large measure an unattainable ideal.

(*Pol.* 1337a3-7). Later, he argues that education must be communal (*Pol.* 1337a18-31) and provides plans for physical (*Pol.* VIII.4) and musical education (*Pol.* VIII.5-7). These are just some examples of the discussions which take place in books VII and VIII. They clearly illustrate how Aristotle delves into the topic of the requirements of the best education for children.

Reading through Aristotle's educational program in *Pol.*'s books VII and VIII, one is left with the impression that his educational program sets high, almost unattainable, requirements for virtue. Does Aristotle believe that his program is the only way to develop all the necessary features of a virtuous individual? Is it philosophically and exegetically plausible to argue that, in *Pol.* VII and VIII, Aristotle provides a more elaborated and detailed account of the notion of habituation expounded in *NE* II? In my view, both questions certainly have negative answers.

The first thing of note is the nature of the investigation in the two last books of the *Pol.* As Aristotle is presenting in these books an educational program for the best possible city, we should not overlook the fact that he begins his investigation from the optimal conditions that might be granted for the acquisition of virtue. This explains why the account sounds very demanding. If these books aimed to show the sole unique possible way to become virtuous, we would have to admit that Aristotle's virtuous man is a mere unattainable ideal. However, I contend that this is not the case. It is much more reasonable to assume that, in these books, Aristotle explores how the legislator of the best possible city could create an environment with minimal evil influences, in which each step of children's education is deliberately established for the purpose of promoting virtue. This interpretative assumption fits perfectly into the scheme proposed in books VII and VIII, sketching the best educational program for the best possible city.

But then, what are the consequences of this view for the *NE*'s notion of habituation? The *NE*'s investigation of habituation does not share the goal of *Pol.*'s books VII and VIII. In the *NE*, Aristotle does not envisage the optimal conditions in which someone might acquire a virtuous character. Rather, he seems to be concerned with the less demanding goal of investigating what enables the virtue of character to develop. Training of character in good habits emerges as one of the necessary requirements for the acquisition of a virtuous character but not an upbringing in good habits. Since, in the ethical treatise, the investigation of the notion of habituation does not invoke the best possible conditions for being habituated, this is a good and plausible explanation of why childhood education does not occupy a privileged place in the discussion of habituation in *NE*, in stark contrast with the *Pol.* In the *NE*'s discussion of habituation, upbringing is mentioned in three scattered passages, and these references to it sound more like suggestions about the positive influence of an early education of character than a stipulation of a requirement for acquiring virtue of character.

In light of these considerations, it seems that, if we use the account of habituation from the *Pol.* to settle certain details of the *NE*'s investigation of habituation, it is exegetically inappropriate to take for granted that the *NE* and the *Pol.* share the same approach to habituation and, consequently, that the latter might, without caveats, elucidate the former. The *NE* does not share the *Pol.*'s background, that is, to be interested in the most suitable conditions to acquire a virtuous character. Perhaps, the *Pol.* might shed light on certain aspects of habituation, or offer insights about which strategies make it successful. But we should avoid the exegetical temptation of thinking that the *NE* and the *Pol.* differ only in terms of the depth of their treatment of the same concept. A fundamental difference in goals distinguishes the two approaches.

Having described the methodological differences of the treatment of habituation in the *NE* and the *Pol.*, I turn my attention to *NE* X.9. The aforementioned investigative differences are frequently overlooked in the interpretation of that chapter. As a consequence, its conclusions are often taken to support the upbringing assumption.

2.8. Training of Character and Upbringing in *NE* X.9: a fresh approach

The last chapter of the *NE* starts out by summarizing the topics investigated throughout the *NE* (*NE* 1179a33-35). First, Aristotle underscores once more that the aim of *NE*'s investigations is oriented towards action, not towards the mere acquisition of knowledge (*NE* 1179a35-b2; see also 1095a5-6 and 1103b26-30). Next, he emphasizes that knowing is not enough for being virtuous (*NE* 1179b2-3) and expresses his scepticism about the power of arguments (λόγοι) to make someone virtuous (*NE* 1179b4-5). This last remark introduces what might be seen as the main concern of his initial argumentation in *NE* X.9. This concern is the topic of investigation until line 1179b31.

In the first part of his argumentation in the chapter, Aristotle casts doubt on the power of arguments and reason to make someone acquire a good character. Importantly, Aristotle recognizes that arguments and reason do not influence all people equally. He distinguishes certain groups and discusses the varying influence of reason to each. Among young people, arguments have some force only on the generous-minded (ἐλευθέριος), on those who have a noble character (ἠθός εὐγενές), and those who are true lovers of the fine (φιλόκαλος) (*NE* 1179b7-9). Concerning the people⁷⁷ who live

⁷⁷ I read the word “πολλοί” in line 1179b10 as meaning the many as formulated by Curzer: “the category of ‘the many’ includes not only children, but also the majority of adults, for these adults are morally childish” (2012, p. 333). I do not think the word “πολλοί” in the passage introduces a subgroup within the group of young people, introduced in line 1179b8. As a consequence of my position, the next passages I quote are about the many in Curzer’s sense. In the *NE*, Aristotle employs the word “πολλοί” when he wants to cover a broad range of people, usually the ones who do not live a virtuous life: 1095a18, 1095a21, 1095b16, 1118b21, 1118b27, 1125b16, 1150a12-13, and 1151a5.

according to the emotions (πάθει ζῶντες), pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, Aristotle sceptically wonders:

T15. τοὺς δὴ τοιούτους τίς ἂν λόγος μεταρρυθμίσει; (NE 1179b16)
What kind of talking, then, would remould such a kind of person?⁷⁸

A few lines later, he insists on the issue but with a different formulation:

T16. οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσειε λόγου ἀποτρέποντος οὐδ' αὖ συνείη ὁ κατὰ πάθος ζῶν· τὸν δ' οὕτως ἔχοντα πῶς οἷόν τε μεταπειῖσαι; (NE 1179b26-28)
For the person who lives according to emotion will not listen to talk that tries to turn him away from it, nor again will he comprehend such talk; how will it be possible to persuade someone like this to change?

Given the incapacity of arguments to effectively move someone towards virtue, Aristotle argues that education through habits should precede the arguments. Interestingly, he first defends this claim without linking it to the education of children or young adults. His formulation is not restrictive. Nor is there any sign of such a restriction in the sequence of the argument. For the arguments to be effective, Aristotle establishes the following condition:

T17. δεῖ προδιειργάσθαι τοῖς ἔθεσι τὴν τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ ψυχὴν πρὸς τὸ καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μισεῖν, ὥσπερ γῆν τὴν θρέψουσιν τὸ σπέρμα (NE 1179b24-26).

The soul of the hearer has to have been prepared beforehand through its habits in order to delight in and loathe the right things, just as one has to prepare soil if it is going to nourish the seed.

T18. δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προὑπάρχειν πῶς οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρὸν (NE 1179b29-31).

The person must in a way already possess a character akin to virtue, one that is attracted by the fine and repulsed by the shameful⁷⁹.

⁷⁸ NE 1095a6-11 makes clear that it is not only young people who follow the emotions in their actions against reason.

⁷⁹ How one understands the concept of shame bears significantly on the status of the upbringing assumption. The concept of shame lends support to the upbringing assumption when the role that it plays in moral education is restricted to the young. According to Jimenez's interpretation (2020, p. 6-7, 13-14; see also Burnyeat 1980, p. 78-79; Papandreou 2019, p. 224), shame is conceived of within the framework of a developmental approach to the acquisition of a virtuous character. Shame is presented in terms of the correct motivation that helps *young individuals* along their way to virtue in their upbringing. At first glance, Aristotle's treatment of shame in NE IV.9 favours this account. However, I think that there are good reasons for resisting such a restrictive approach. Aristotle's statement that shame is not fitting for every age, but for youth only (οὐ πάση δ' ἡλικίᾳ τὸ πάθος ἀρμόζει, ἀλλὰ τῇ νέᾳ) (NE 1128b15-16) seems to support Jimenez's approach. To fully understand the limits of Aristotle's claim, we must remember that Aristotle does not classify shame as a disposition (ἔξις). For him, it resembles more an emotion (πάθος) (NE 1128b11). In another passage, he says young people live according to the emotions by pursuing what is pleasant (NE 1156a32-33). But living according to the emotions is not only a feature of young individuals (NE 1179b13, 1179b27-28). In NE I.3, Aristotle recognizes that some people are *young in character*, despite being no longer young in age. He applies this label to these people because they follow their emotions and act in accordance with them (NE 1095a5-8). In his discussion of shame in NE IV.9, Aristotle explains his claim that shame is fitting for the young by saying that they live by their emotions (διὰ τὸ πάθει ζῶντας) and, in virtue of that, they make many mistakes (πολλὰ ἀμαρτάνειν) (NE 1128b16-28). Given that the young *in age* are not the only ones who live in accordance with emotions, I see no reason to avoid the assumption that shame might also play an

The formulations employed here are far from suggesting an association between habituation and upbringing. On the contrary, the passages show that Aristotle is more concerned with the less demanding claim that a previous training of character is required. Passage T18's reference to the hearer's previous good education of the soul in habits inevitably casts the reader's mind back to *NE* I.4. In both places, we need not take Aristotle as suggesting that the previous training of character, necessary before attending his lessons, is the same as upbringing. Neither passage commits Aristotle to this unduly restrictive view⁸⁰.

2.9. *NE* X.9: the transition to *Politics* and the best possible education

If my argument is successful, a pressing challenge arises. How does my interpretation address Aristotle's statements after line 1179b31? From this line on, Aristotle once again takes up the topic of moral education during the first phases of life, which may arguably be seen as a piece of evidence in favour of the upbringing assumption. Is he not spelling out, in this argumentative move, that habituation is to be conceived of as upbringing?

important role in the moral training of anyone who lives in accordance with emotions, being *young in character* but not in age. Another statement in *NE* IV.9 that seems to support a restrictive view of shame is the following: "and we praise young people who are prone to this passion, but an older person no one would praise for being prone to the sense of disgrace, since we think he should not do anything that need cause this sense" (καὶ ἐπαινοῦμεν τῶν μὲν νέων τοὺς αἰδήμονας, πρεσβύτερον δ' οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐπαινέσειεν ὅτι αἰσχυντηλός· οὐδὲν γὰρ οἴομεθα δεῖν αὐτὸν πράττειν ἐφ' οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνῃ) (*NE* 1128b18-21). Apparently, Aristotle does not see shame as an appropriate emotion for older people. But, here, I think that some caveats are needed. Aristotle is not denying that older people might do shameful things and feel shame. He is claiming only that older people will not be praised for being ashamed. Moreover, when Aristotle uses the word "πρεσβύτερον" in the passage, he has in mind those people who are already very advanced in age (see, for instance, *NE* 1143b12, 1155a13, 1158b13, and 1165a27). It introduces the possibility, which Aristotle does not deny, that shame might be a praiseworthy step towards virtue also for those who are no longer young in age but who are not also older in the aforementioned sense.

⁸⁰ My interpretation of this first part of Aristotle's arguments is completely at odds with Burnyeat's. According to him, in this first part, Aristotle explains why a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for benefiting from the *NE*'s arguments and discussions (1980, p. 75, see also 81). Vasiliou endorses a similar view. According to him, Aristotle repeats in *NE* X.9 certain ideas present in *NE* I.4 about the audience, content and purpose of the work. In Vasiliou's interpretation of *NE* I.4, Aristotle demands a good upbringing of his students (1996, p. 774). Like Vasiliou, Irwin connects the passages I.4, 1095b4-6, and X.9, 1179b23-31, and sees Aristotle in both as demanding a good upbringing from his students (1978, p. 256, 261-262, 271 n. 30). Surprisingly, however, Irwin adverts that in I.3, 1095a2-11, Aristotle demands just "the capacity to control emotions" (1978, p. 262). As I have been arguing, we need not read I.4, 1095b4-6, and X.9, 1179b23-31, as establishing a good upbringing as a necessary requirement for virtue. Like the passage I.3, 1095a2-11, the two aforementioned passages demand good training of character as a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a good character. Smith points out that, in *NE* X.9, Aristotle defends the "near impossibility" of reason changing those who did not have a good upbringing (1994, p. 61). Sherman interpreters the passage as defending the position that, if the individual is properly brought up, he may be moved by argument (1989, p. 165). Kristjánsson takes the passage to establish upbringing as a necessary condition for virtue (2013, p. 432). As I have shown, Aristotle's requirement is not so stringent. We have no reason to claim that upbringing is a necessary requirement for someone to be able to be guided by arguments. What is required is a good training of character, not a good upbringing. As I have discussed in footnote 49, certain interpretations seem to rely on the assumption that the claim that "a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for taking advantage of Aristotle's lessons" is equivalent to "a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of virtue of character". This assumption seems to underlie the interpretations presented.

Aristotle begins the passage by saying that it is hard to be a well-brought-up person without having been raised under laws prescribing a correct education of character (*NE* 1179b31-35). One interpretative possibility is to count the passage as evidence in favour of the upbringing assumption. In that case, the passage emphasizes the importance of the law in guaranteeing access to a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a good character, that is, to a good early-childhood education of character. However, the passage might be approached in a different way.

It is not implausible that the arguments which Aristotle proposes starting at line 1179b31 are better taken to be intending to officially demarcate the transition from the *NE* to the *Pol.* Consequently, then, the arguments introduce Aristotle's views about the best possible education, a topic important to *Pol.*'s project. In contrast to passages T6, T10, and T11 from *NE* II, the topic of childhood education in *NE* X.9 is discussed in its relation to the laws. The discussion after line 1179b31 displays an undeniable interest in issues that will be investigated in the *Pol.* For instance, Aristotle claims that law should prescribe nurturing (τροφή), the occupations (ἐπιτήδευμα) (*NE* 1179b34-35), and should cover the whole of life (ὅλως δὴ περὶ πάντα τὸν βίον) (*NE* 1180a3-4)⁸¹. He mentions Sparta as one of the few cities in which the legislators gave some attention to nurturing (τροφή) and occupations (ἐπιτήδευμα) and reproaches most cities for their neglect of these aspects of life, saying that, in these cities, people live as they please, like the Cyclops (*NE* 1180a24-29)⁸². He shows preference for a common education provided by the community (τὸ γίνεσθαι κοινήν ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ ὀρθήν) over individual education (*NE* 1180a29-32)⁸³. He points out that communal educational provisions (κοινὰ ἐπιμέλεια) are effected by laws, and the good ones by good laws (*NE* 1180a34-35)⁸⁴ and that those who care to make others better should become able to legislate (νομοθετικῶν πειρατέον γενέσθαι) (*NE* 1180b23-25)⁸⁵. In one of his final remarks,

⁸¹ In the *Pol.*, Aristotle discusses how best to regulate the different aspects of community life. Here are some examples. He discusses education in the different phases of life (*Pol.* 1336a3-1337a6). He argues that the best constitution to live under is the one in which the citizens can practice the best actions and have a happy life (*Pol.* 1324a23-25, a32-35). He discusses how the roles of ruling and being ruled should be assigned to citizens and whether age is a factor to be taken into account (*Pol.* 1332b12-1333a3). He expresses a preference for assigning the task of ruling to older people (*Pol.* 1332b35-1333a3, 1333a12-13). He proposes several conditions for marriage and reproduction (*Pol.* 1334b29-1335b38). In *Pol.* VIII, he launches a long investigation into musical education and gives some attention to physical education. All these discussions demonstrate Aristotle's interest in finding the best arrangement to cover the different aspects of community life.

⁸² Sparta's legislation is discussed in the *Pol.* on several occasions and with different focuses. Some examples: *Pol.* II.9, 1324b5-9, 1333b12-29, 1337a28-29, 1338b9-14.

⁸³ At the end of *Pol.* VII, Aristotle proposes the question whether education should be provided privately or by the community (*Pol.* 1337a4-5). His answer, given at the beginning of *Pol.* VIII, is that the education of the citizens must be provided by the community, not on a private basis (*Pol.* 1337a18-27).

⁸⁴ In the *Pol.*, Aristotle argues that a good political and legal arrangement is necessary for the city to achieve its aim of promoting a happy life. See, for instance, *Pol.* 1331b24-26, 1332a3-7, 1332a28-38.

⁸⁵ In the *Pol.*, Aristotle highlights on many occasions that the legislator's role is to make the citizens virtuous individuals. For instance, the education of the young people should be one of the primary concerns of the legislator (*Pol.* 1337a8-9, 1337a30-31). The legislator should also be concerned about shameful talk among children and the young (*Pol.* 1336b3-6). The seasoned legislator should seek the best way of making the citizens participate in the happy and good life by considering the circumstances of their lives (*Pol.* 1324b41-1325a14). Aristotle discusses the

Aristotle proposes an investigation into legislation (τὸ περὶ τῆς νομοθεσίας) (*NE* 1181b13), a task that will be carried out in the *Pol.*, particularly in book II. He promises that this investigation will provide a better view about what kind of constitution is best (ποία πολιτεία ἀρίστη) (*NE* 1181b21; see *Pol.* 1288b2-4, 1323a11-16).

Given all these remarks, it is reasonable to see part of the final chapter of the *NE* as already embedded in sketchily advancing discussions that will receive more attention in the *Pol.* This interpretation provides us with good reasons not to take the chapter's discussion of training of character in terms of upbringing as evidence for the upbringing assumption. Aristotle is not arguing that a good upbringing is a necessary requirement for the acquisition of a virtuous character.

In terms of the textual evidence, it is much more plausible to interpret *NE* X.9's second half as advocating certain claims about the best education. Consequently, Aristotle's claims are already committed to the underlying assumption of *Pol.*'s books VII and VIII, which considers the optimal conditions for the development of a virtuous character. Exegetically, it is not unlikely that a preliminary discussion about the best education occurs in the *NE*'s last chapter. Philosophically, it avoids adding Aristotle with the burden of defending the claim that, in the absence of a good upbringing, no one can become virtuous.

features that citizens must have to be easily led by the legislator (*Pol.* 1327b36-38). For him, the legislator's aim is to provide the conditions for the citizens to become good, the legislator must care about the activities by which the citizens may develop a virtuous character (*Pol.* 1333a14-15).

Chapter 3: The Goal Passages

3.1. The Humean Interpretation of the Labour Division

In the discussion about the labour division in the *NE*, there are some passages that are often cited as decisive to settle the interpretative problems in favour of a Humean view of Aristotle's claims. In these passages, virtue of character is shown as the capacity responsible for setting the moral goals and preserving the principles of actions (*NE* 1140b11-20, 1144a7-9, 1144a31-1144b1, 1145a4-6, and 1151a15-19). Taken at their face value and together, the passages might be convincingly regarded as Aristotle's last word on the discussion of the labour division. In Humean interpretations, the role of setting moral goals is denied to reason. In this sort of interpretation, the goals which an individual is morally attached to and which he acts on are not the result of reason's work of evaluating the moral goodness of competing goals and courses of action. The goals are set by a certain non-rational part of the soul, which has in habituation the moulding of its tendencies to pursue certain goals, constituting in this way the person's character⁸⁶. On the other hand, reason is left with the task of identifying how to promote character's goals. Moss (2011, p. 205) describes the gist of this interpretation with accuracy:

The ultimate goal each person pursues is happiness (*eudaimonia*) as he or she views it, and we each reach our view about what happiness consists in – virtuous activity, for example, or the life of pleasure or of honor – not by any intellectual process, but instead through the non-rational habituation of the non-rational part of the soul.

The foregoing labour division is philosophically troublesome for some reasons. According to this division, our moral goals are not the product of a rational procedure. Consequently, as moral evaluations in terms of good and bad or just and unjust can be carried out only by reason⁸⁷,

⁸⁶ As is clear from chapter I, character is understood as being related to a certain non-rational part of the soul, that is, the non-rational desiderative part. The relation between character and this non-rational part of the soul is such that character must be taken to be the way this part of the soul reacts to the moral demands. In a virtuous soul, this non-rational part reacts in the way of being responsive to reason's instructions, while in the vicious one this part of the soul overcomes reason and acts by following what pleases this non-rational part. So character is better described not as being a certain non-rational part of the soul, but as being the way that this part of the soul behaves in moral circumstances.

⁸⁷ The topic of cognition of value has received more attention over the recent years. The orthodox claim that the non-rational part of the soul is not able to grasp things *as good*, but at most *as pleasant*, has been compellingly questioned by Moss. For her, one of the philosophical concerns that move those who argue against a Humean interpretation of Aristotle's claims (or as she calls them Intellectualists) is the fact that, for them, we desire our ends because we find them good (Moss 2011, p. 251) and a non-rational part of the soul is unable to recognize something *as good*. Part of Moss' project of defending a Humean interpretation of the labour division involves to show that anti-Humean interpretations tend to assign cognition only to reason and to take character as a purely conative force. For her, this is due to what she calls an "anachronistic conflation", which makes "the equation of the non-rational with the noncognitive" (Moss 2011, p. 206). Although I think Aristotle granted to the non-rational part of the soul, i.e. perception and *phantasia*, the power of having certain critical capacities, that is, capacities with cognitive powers (*MA* 700b15-23, 700b23-29, *DA* 427a17-22, 428a3ff., 433a10-11), this cognitive power must not

our moral choices are not made for the sake of their goodness, justice or nobleness. In assigning the choice of moral goals to character, Aristotle ends up arguing against the possibility of individuals adopting their moral goals based on proper moral criteria. Character is constituted by a certain non-rational part of the soul, which is incapable of discursive reasoning. As a result of the impossibility of reason playing the role of setting moral goals, reason's work becomes restricted to find out how to attain the goals set by character. That position of reason in regard to character has been described by several interpreters as remarkably akin to Hume's famous statement: "reason is, and ought only

be extended to the point of claiming that they are able to evaluate things and situations *as good* or *as bad* but only *as pleasant* or *as painful*. This view might be easily drawn from Aristotle's statements. In *NE* 1111b17, Aristotle states that appetite, in contrast to *prohairesis*, aims at the pleasant and painful. The same claim that the appetite's aim is pleasure is also found at *DA* 414b1-6 and at *PA* 661a6-8 (see also *DA* 433b7-10). As is clear from my discussion in chapter 1, appetite belongs to the non-rational desiderative part of the soul whose good condition constitutes virtue of character. Against the possibility of character being able to weigh competing goals through an evaluation of the moral values in dispute, there is the fact that in *NE* I.13 Aristotle does not grant to character any reasoning power. Its participation in reason is given only *insofar as* it obeys to reason. This lack of reasoning power is due to the fact that character belongs to a non-rational part of the soul and is called rational only in an enlarged way. Another point in favour of the view that character's primary aim is pleasure is that in *NE* II Aristotle dedicates an entire discussion about how virtue of character is related to pleasures and pains and how it should be well-educated towards the right pleasures (1104b3-1105a16). At some point, Aristotle states that "[...] in fact what is fine and advantageous seems pleasant" (1105a1). One possible interpretation is to take this statement to be implying that character does not desire the fine *as such*. It aims at the fine insofar as it is regarded as pleasurable not as fine. A threat to this interpretation is posed by Aristotle's statement at 1119b16, where he says that the appetite aims the fine. This threat, however, is far from being decisive. One way out is available if we adopt an extensional interpretation of Aristotle's claim. According to the extensionalist interpretation, what appetite aims at is what is pleasant but what is pleasant turns out to be also fine. It avoids the claim that appetite has in view the fine *as such*. It aims the fine indeed but *as pleasant*. In the *Pol.*, Aristotle claims that only human beings are political animals because they are the unique animals that have λόγος to express moral values. The other animals are able to voice only pleasure and pain (*Pol.* 1253a9-18). This is a strong indication that the non-rational cognition, be it the one which belongs to humans or to animals, is hardly able to recognize something *as good*. This sort of cognition delivers nothing more than an evaluation in terms of pleasure and pain. I fully agree with Vasiliou's claim that "animals (and the non-rational part of the soul) have desire merely for the pleasant—precisely what the *Pol.* passage spells out" (Vasiliou 2014, p. 365). The discussion of the good and apparent good in the *NE* (1113a15-b2) could be used to defend that character recognizes the good; however, I do not think it is a decisive passage to settle the matter in favour of the possibility of non-rational capacities recognizing the good *as such*. The first thing to be noticed is that the discussion about the good and apparent good takes into account only human beings. One implication of this is that the discussion has in view beings that have rational cognition. In this text, it is almost impossible to try to draw a line between rational and non-rational cognition. When Aristotle affirms: "for each disposition has its own corresponding range of fine things and pleasant things, and presumably what most distinguishes the good person is his ability to see what is true in every set of circumstances" (καθ' ἐκάστην γὰρ ἕξις ἰδιά ἐστι καλὰ καὶ ἡδέα, καὶ διαφέρει πλείστον ἴσως ὁ σπουδαῖος τῷ τᾶληθές ἐν ἐκάστοις ὄραν) (*NE* 1113a31-33), it is not clear whether the word "ἕξις" is used to claim that Aristotle here talks only about dispositions of character because even the rational virtues are described as dispositions in the *NE* (ἕξις ἀποδεικτική (*NE* 1139b31-32), ἕξις ποιητική (*NE* 1140a20-21), ἕξις πρακτική (*NE* 1140b5 and 1140b20-21)). We are not allowed to rule out the possibility that, when Aristotle says that the good person sees what is true, he includes in this power to see what is true the work of the rational cognition, especially if we consider the fact that more than once Aristotle appeals to the image of seeing correctly and seeing what is right in order to make reference to *phronesis* (1143b13-14 and 1144a29-30). In my view, Smith found a concise and precise formulation to the traditional interpretation: "in virtue of possessing reason we can have motivations that are not available to a beast; [...] simply in virtue of possessing reason, we possess the concept of value: we respond to the world not just in terms of whether things are pleasant or painful, but also in terms of whether things are good or bad" (Smith 1996, p. 67). For a comprehensive and compelling defence of the claim that non-rational cognition recognizes the fine *as such*, see Moss 2012, p. 3-66. For a well-argued criticism on her view, see Vasiliou 2014, p. 353-381. In contrast to Moss, Hämäläinen defends the orthodox view that cognition of value depends on rational cognition 2015, p. 88-114.

to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part iii, Section 3)⁸⁸.

In this chapter, I take sides with interpretations that challenge this way of understanding the labour division. Contrary to what a face-value interpretation seems to suggest, the goal passages do not bind us to support the claim that character sets the moral goals in the terms proposed by a crude Humean interpretation⁸⁹. I propose a different way to construe the philosophical claims of the goal passages. Before proposing an interpretation of these passages, the first step I take is to put together the passages where Aristotle articulates his views about the relationship between character and reason. I consider that the goal passages constitute just a part of Aristotle’s statements on the labour division and should be understood in a wider context.

There are many passages where Aristotle makes clear statements about his views on the morally expected interaction between character and reason in a virtuous soul. One of my interpretative assumptions is that the goal passages cannot be appropriately understood independently from these statements. When properly integrated in the controversy of the labour division, these statements breathe new life into the discussion of the goal passages. It is interpretatively sound to take into account the passages that advance claims about the interplay between the non-rational and rational parts of the soul in the discussion of the labour division, in spite of the fact that these passages do not employ the vocabulary traditionally associated with this discussion, I mean, the vocabulary of means and goals. Moreover, there is a fundamental aspect of Aristotle’s view on human beings that is usually overlooked in the discussion of the labour division: the central place Aristotle gives to reason in human nature and in a proper human life. Any interpretation that grants to character the role of deciding which goals should be pursued does not do justice to Aristotle’s statements on how reason should work in a virtuously functioning soul. Against Moss, these passages will show that Aristotle neither denied to reason a role in working out the ends nor remained silent about

⁸⁸ Vasiliou gives an enlightening formulation of the reason why interpreters have a tendency to resist this view: “The resistance to this straightforward reading is not so much textual as philosophical. If Aristotle actually means what he seems to say, then it can sound as though he is a crude Humean who rejects the view that reason or intellect supplies, or contributes to supplying, our ends; rather, our goals are determined wholly by desire” (Vasiliou 2014, p. 372).

⁸⁹ Here it is important to give ears to Moss’ warning about the crude Humean interpretation: “the true Humean interpreter is in fact something of a straw man: I know of no one who actually argues that Aristotelian reason is a slave to passion” (2014, p. 228). Those who defend a Humean view of Aristotle’s claims usually make an effort, among others, to morally enrich the role played by *phronesis* in deliberation as well as propose that character possesses cognitive powers. Moss herself adopts these two strategies. Zingano presents the virtue of character as belonging to the “domínio conativo-emotivo do agente” and as arising from the “habituação, *ethismos*, de se dirigir a fins de certa natureza e não seu contrário, fundada em uma noção primária de busca ou de fuga, *hairesis e phugê*” without making explicit the cognitive dimension of the character in the choice of the goals (2021, p. 54). He recognizes, however, that reason operates inside the virtue of character in order to work out the means to achieve the goal chosen by character (2021, p. 55-56, 58 footnote 10), but this still leaves the choice of goals by character without a cognitive dimension.

it⁹⁰. Quite to the contrary, Aristotle insisted several times on the claim that reason plays a pivotal role in regard to what should be object of pursuit.

3.2. Revisiting the *Ergon* Argument: human nature and the place of reason

In the *ergon* argument, Aristotle addresses for the first time the issue of the interplay between character and reason. As I have already shown in chapter 1, in the division of the soul proposed in *NE* I.7 one of the parts of the soul presented by Aristotle with the Greek expression “λόγον ἔχον” stands for the part whose excellent performance constitutes virtue of character. Let me take a step back and retrieve the terms of the classification of the two rational parts of the soul in *NE* I.7 to elucidate it better. The λόγον-ἔχον part is presented in a twofold division. One part is said rational in the sense of “ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ” and the other in the sense of “ἔχον [λόγον] καὶ διανοούμενον”. These two classifications of the λόγον-ἔχον part come out within a context where Aristotle is giving some details about the first conclusion attained by him in the *ergon* argument, that is, the identification of “τὸ ἔργον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” with “πρακτική [ζωή] τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος”. He identifies the proper human activity with the performance of two λόγον-ἔχον parts and describes in outline what is expected from each of them in the case of a soul performing virtuously the proper human activity. As will become clear, one important reason for not neglecting the twofold division of the λόγον-ἔχον part when discussing the labour division is that it is part of Aristotle’s effort to propose what he takes to be the desired psychological makeup of the interactions between character and reason in a virtuous soul.

An important conclusion drawn by the *ergon* argument for my discussion is that, given that the proper activity of human beings consists in the exercise of the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul – let’s set aside for the moment the details involved –, a genuine human life is the one that is centred around reason. In the sequence of the *ergon* argument, Aristotle makes clear that a good human life is found in the virtuous exercise of the λόγον-ἔχον part (*NE* 1098a16-18). Previously, when discussing in *NE* I.4 the three lives that were candidates to be the position of *eudaimon* life (political life, philosophical life, and the life devoted to the bodily pleasures), Aristotle had harshly reproached those who organize their lives around bodily pleasures by saying that they live like grazing cattle (*NE* 1095b20). A life devoted to bodily pleasures is a life in which the central element in it is also shared by animals and, for this reason, cannot stand as a life proper to humans beings. In the *ergon* argument, the life of perception is excluded from constituting a proper human life on the

⁹⁰ “For despite what Aristotle seems to say in these passages [the goal passages], these interpreters [who do not endorse a Humean interpretation] insist, he [Aristotle] must in fact hold that intellect plays a crucial role in identifying our ends: either (despite his apparent denials) we do after all reason about ends, or (despite his apparent silence on the point) we grasp them through some function of intellect distinct from reasoning – dialectic, or ‘intuition’ (*nous*)” (Moss 2011, p. 205).

grounds that it is shared by the other animals (*NE* 1098a1-3). This gives support to the general conclusion the *ergon* argument arrives at: in the life of a virtuous individual the exercise of reason occupies a privileged place and needs to be a central feature around which life is organized.

The twofold division established within the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul is the first step taken by Aristotle in the *NE* to spell out the interactions between character and reason. He divides the λόγον-ἔχον part into two parts. One which is λόγον ἔχον *insofar as* it is obedient to reason (ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ) and the other which is λόγον ἔχον *insofar as* it has reason and thinks (ὡς ἔχον [λόγον] καὶ διανοοούμενον) (*NE* 1098a4-5). As already argued in chapter 1, the former part stands for character and the latter for the rational part properly speaking. What matters for my discussion is the fact that character is introduced by Aristotle in terms of obedience to reason (λόγος), that is, Aristotle assigns to character the role of being obedient to reason in the performance of the proper human activity. Although it is not clear from the passage in which terms this obedience is conceived, we know that reason exerts, or should exert, authority over character in a way yet to be explained.

To avoid confusion, a small caveat is needed. When Aristotle describes character by saying “ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ”, he is not claiming that character *as such* obeys reason. If that were the case, character would virtually follow everything that reason exhorts to be done. In this scenario, there would be neither *akrasia* nor *enkrateia*. And we would then be entitled to say that, contrary to Hume’s claim, Aristotle defended that character is the slave of reason. Nothing could be more far away from Aristotle’s view. The argumentative context helps us eschew these implications. As the guiding goal of the *ergon* argument is to identify the proper human activity, I think the correct way of interpreting his claims is to take his characterizations to be expressing what are the duties that should be carried out by each of the λόγον-ἔχον parts when they work properly and contribute to the performance of the proper human activity. In other words, Aristotle is not interested in describing how these two parts work and interact with each other in any situation, but how they are expected to work and interact so as to fulfil the human function.

Once it is clear that the twofold division is based on a prescriptive account of how the two λόγον-ἔχον parts should work, it is important to elicit its philosophical implication to the labour division. In my interpretation, the claim defended by Aristotle is that, when the proper human activity is virtuously performed by an individual, the role played by character is to be obedient to reason. The problem here is to figure out in regard to which aspect character is obedient to reason. Does character follow reason in regard to actions’ means and goals? Or does reason exert its

authority only in regard to the means while pursuing the goals given by character?⁹¹ One of the difficulties of posing these questions to the passage under discussion is the fact that the *ergon* argument as a whole is clearly not committed to the vocabulary of the discussion of the labour division, which is mainly based on use of the terms “means” and “goals”. This divergence of vocabulary casts some doubts about the possibility of turning the vocabulary of means and ends into the vocabulary of obedience.

In spite of the foregoing difficulty, it is definitely beyond any doubt the fact that the *ergon* argument puts reason as the most important element of the human nature. This situation gives rise to the following question: how could Aristotle have given to character the leading role⁹² in actions after defending reason as the central element in a genuine human life? The consequence of adopting any Humean interpretation of the labour division is that moral choices end up being organized in conformity with character’s goals, not reason’s. As a result, we would have to admit that Aristotle assigned to a non-rational capacity the central role in the organization of the human life as well as the job of providing the goals for the sake of which the human life should be guided. Unavoidably, the Humean interpretation goes in the opposite direction of Aristotle’s views on the proper human activity and human nature.

3.3. Revisiting *NE* I.13: the vocabulary of obedience

The use of the vocabulary of obedience in the *ergon* argument is not an isolated case. This vocabulary, introduced without further details in *NE* I.7, reveals again its importance when Aristotle gives his classification of the virtues in *NE* I.13. The quality of the interactions held between character and reason is what in large measure contributes to classify the moral disposition of the individuals. The virtuous, vicious, enkratic, and akratic individuals are what they are due to how character and reason interact in regard to emotions and actions. The notion of obedience is employed by Aristotle to illustrate a certain sort of moral disposition.

As already shown in chapter 1, the division of the virtues proposed by Aristotle is basically build on his moral psychology. It is worth noticing that, in his exposition of the parts of the soul, their corresponding virtues, and potential interactions in *NE* I.13, he presents these topics by exploring three different moral dispositions: *akrasia*, *enkrateia*, and virtue. In each of them,

⁹¹ This view is defended by Moss 2014. She admits that character must obey reason, but she provides a restrictive account of this claim. For her, the obedience of which Aristotle speaks is restricted to the means. Character follows reason in its working out of the correct means to achieve the goals, but the goals are set by character: “an Aristotelian virtuous person’s non-rational part is different. It is well habituated and so wants the fine and the intermediate, but it also knows that this means waiting to hear what reason prescribes [in regard to the means]” (2014, p. 239).

⁹² The expression “leading role” was coined by Smith in order to express the idea of the capacity that, whichever it is, plays “the role of determining good moral ends” (Smith 1996, p. 58).

character and reason interact in different ways towards each other and these different interactions shed light on how Aristotle characterizes the different moral dispositions.

Aristotle praises the part that has reason in the akratic and enkratic individuals because it exhorts towards the best things (τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ) (*NE* 1102b14-16). If we appeal to the vocabulary of means and ends to grasp what is going on in the passage, we end up being initially in doubt about what is that towards which reason exhorts akratic and enkratic individuals. Does reason exhort the individuals to pursue the correct means while the goals are given by another capacity? Or does reason exhort them towards what it takes as the best thing to be done, that is, which goal is to be pursued? The sequence of the passage has a say on these questions. We learn from what follows that there is an element in the soul that opposes and fights against reason (*NE* 1102b16-25). This element is the non-rational appetitive-and-in-general-desiderative part of the soul (*NE* 1102b30), whose way of reacting to moral demands constitutes character. According to the Humean interpretation, character is responsible for setting the goals. If we assume that the dispute between character and reason concerns the moral goals, the passage here is evidence that Aristotle does not discard the possibility that reason also plays the role of choosing goals and sometimes does it in opposition to character. The example employed by Aristotle to illustrate the conflict seems to support this interpretation. Let me quote it:

T1. τοῦ γὰρ ἐγκρατοῦς καὶ ἀκρατοῦς τὸν λόγον καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ λόγον ἔχον ἐπαινοῦμεν ὀρθῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ· φαίνεται δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸν λόγον πεφυκός, ὃ μάχεται καὶ ἀντιτείνει τῷ λόγῳ. ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ καθάπερ τὰ παραλελυμένα τοῦ σώματος μόρια εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ προαιρουμένων κινήσει τὸναντίον εἰς τὰ ἀριστερὰ παραφέρεται, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς οὕτως· ἐπὶ τάναντία γὰρ αἱ ὀρμαὶ τῶν ἀκρατῶν. ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς σώμασι μὲν ὀρώμεν τὸ παραφερόμενον, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐχ ὀρώμεν.

Take the enkratic and akratic individuals: we praise their reason, and the aspect of their soul that possesses reason; it gives the right encouragement, in the direction of what is best, but there appears to be something else besides reason that is naturally in them, which fights against reason and resists it. For exactly as with the paralysed limbs, which when their owners decide to move to the right take off in the wrong direction, moving to the left, so it is in the case of the soul: the impulses of the akratic individual are contrary to each other. The difference is that in the case of the body we actually see the part that is moving wrongly, which we do not in the case of the soul (*NE* 1102b14-23).

The passage proposes an analogy that can be understood in terms of a comparison between the example of to which direction the limbs must be moved and which moral goals must be pursued. In the case of the paralysed limbs, although the person with the paralysed limbs orders his limbs to go to one direction, to the right, they go to an opposite direction, to the left. In the akratic soul, the command issued by reason is to pursue a certain moral goal but the non-rational part of the soul makes the individual pursue a different one, opposing reason's command. The example given by Aristotle shows that the non-rational part of the soul in an akratic individual and his reason are in

dispute about a same aspect of the action, that is, about which goal must be pursued. Reason and the non-rational part of the soul in an akratic individual do not deal with different aspects of an action. Their dispute is about what goal should be pursued, formulated comparatively by Aristotle as a dispute about the order given by someone to his limbs to go to one direction and the limbs doing otherwise. The example does not depict reason as responsible for the means and the character of the akratic individual for the goals. Reason is not shown as working out the best way of going either right or left after akratic character's choice over one of these two options. The dispute is over the choice itself of going either right or left. The example calls into question the Humean interpretation, for, according to it, reason does not have the power to oppose character's choices.

Even though the passage suggests that reason also might play the role of setting the goals to be pursued, someone might argue that, as the passage is not concerned primarily with the labour division, the example and its implications should not be taken so seriously and that it is more exegetically reasonable to assign to Aristotle a position grounded in the goal passages. My reply to this objection is that the goal passages are just a part of a longer story about the interplay between reason and character. This story has its starting point in Aristotle's statements about character and reason in *NE I* and goes throughout the treatment of the particular virtues. The goal passages are the point of arrival of the labour division and should be taken in light of the previous discussions and in the wider context of the *NE*. More particularly about the passage in *NE I.13* under discussion, my reply is that the conflict between character and reason about what is to be done is not a lost piece of argument in the middle of a discussion about the classification of virtues based on a certain moral psychology, it is perfectly integrated in Aristotle's strategy of spelling out what he thinks about how character and reason must behave in relation to each other in a well-ordered soul, that is, in a virtuous soul. In my view, *NE I.13* is not only about the classification of virtues but also about the expected role that must be played by character and reason in an individual with a virtuous soul. The passage below taken from *NE I.13* confirms this view:

T2. (i) λόγου δὲ καὶ τοῦτο φαίνεται μετέχειν, ὥσπερ εἶπομεν· πειθαρχεῖ γοῦν τῷ λόγῳ τὸ τοῦ ἐγκρατοῦς—ἔτι δ' ἴσως εὐηκοώτερόν ἐστι τὸ τοῦ σώφρονος καὶ ἀνδρείου· πάντα γὰρ ὁμοφωνεῖ τῷ λόγῳ. **(ii)** φαίνεται δὴ καὶ τὸ ἄλογον διττόν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ φυτικὸν οὐδαμῶς κοινοῦεῖ λόγου, τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν μετέχει πως, ἢ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πειθαρχικόν· οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν φίλων φαμέν ἔχειν λόγον, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ τῶν μαθηματικῶν. ὅτι δὲ πείθεται πως ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἄλογον, μὴνύει καὶ ἡ νουθέτησις καὶ πᾶσα ἐπιτίμησις τε καὶ παράκλησις. **(iii)** εἰ δὲ χρὴ καὶ τοῦτο φάναι λόγον ἔχειν, διττόν ἐσται καὶ τὸ λόγον ἔχον, τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δ' ὥσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικόν τι. διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν διαφορὰν ταύτην· λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικὰς τὰς δὲ ἠθικὰς, (*NE 1102b25-1103a5*).

(i) But this part too [that which opposes reason in akrasia and enkrateia] seems to participate in reason, as we have said: at any rate, in the enkratic person it is obedient to reason – and in the temperate and courageous person it is presumably still readier to listen; for in him it always chimes with reason. **(ii)** The non-rational, then, too appears to be

double in nature. For the plant-like aspect of the soul does not share in reason in any way, while the appetitive and in general desiring part does participate in it in a way, i.e. in so far as it is capable of listening to it and obeying it: it is the way one is reasonable when one takes account of advice from one's father or loved ones, not when one has an account of things, as for example in mathematics. That the non-rational is in a way persuaded by reason is indicated by our practice of admonishing people, and all the different forms in which we reprimand and encourage them. **(iii)** If one should call this too 'possessing reason', then the aspect of the soul that possesses reason will also be double in nature: one element of it will have it in the proper sense and in itself, another as something capable of listening as if to one's father. Virtue too is divided according to this difference; for we call some of them intellectual virtues, others virtues of character.

In passage (i), Aristotle affirms once again that there is a certain non-rational part of the soul that participates in reason. The first time he said it was in line 1102b13. We already now that this part stands for the appetitive and in general desiring part, whose way of reacting to moral circumstances constitutes character. What comes in the sequence delimits precisely how Aristotle sees the relationship between this part of the soul and reason in a virtuous individual. In the case of *enkrateia*, the non-rational part of the soul listens to reason to some extent; however, in the case of temperate and courageous individuals, the non-rational part is much more prone to listen to what reason says (*εὐηκοώτερον*). Aristotle gives then a step further and makes clear that it is not just a matter of paying attention to what reason says but of fully agreeing with reason (*πάντα γὰρ ὁμοφωνεῖ τῷ λόγῳ*) (*NE* 1102b28). In the discussion about the conflict between reason and the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part, responsible for character, I have argued in favour of the view that what was the object of dispute was the goal to be pursued. Here Aristotle makes clear that, at least in the case of the virtuous individuals, character listens to reason and, moreover, completely agrees with it, acting based on what reason prescribes. Aristotle's statement might be taken to be his way of saying in the vocabulary of obedience that the leading role in the actions performed by a virtuous soul is played by reason, not by character. Given all the emphasis that Aristotle puts on the importance of character listening to and agreeing with reason, it would be very awkward that what he meant to say was just that character must follow reason only in regard to the means of actions, while the appetitive and in general desiring part, responsible for character, itself sets the goals.

The passage (ii) is crucial for my interpretation. But first a step back. The examples of *enkrateia* and *akrasia* are initially brought by Aristotle in order to show that there is a non-rational part of the soul that partakes in reason. That is announced right before the two examples are given: "but another kind of soul also seems to be non-rational, although participating in a way in reason" (*ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογος εἶναι, μετέχουσα μέντοι πῆ λόγου*) (*NE* 1102b13-14). Here Aristotle adopts a cautious approach about how a certain non-rational part of the soul, that is, the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part, responsible for character, takes part in reason. To stress this careful approach, he employs the particle "πῆ" in connection with the verb "μετέχουσα"

and, by doing so, he announces the interaction but does not state in which terms it should be taken. The sequence of the passage is an attempt of spelling out in which terms we should flesh out the content of this “πη”.

Now back to Aristotle’s concluding remarks about how to understand the sort of participation that character has in reason. In lines 1102b30-31, Aristotle retrieves the verb “μετέχω”, which is followed by a particle indicating a certain indeterminacy about the kind of participation (πως). This time, however, Aristotle explains how this participation in reason should be understood. The particle “ἥ” in line 1102b31 introduces under which aspects character partakes in reason. Aristotle’s answer is clear: character partakes in reason insofar as it listens to reason (κατήκοόν) and obeys it (πειθαρχικόν). The nutritive part of the soul was excluded from the investigation in *NE* I.13 because it takes no part in human virtue (*NE* 1102b13). And it takes no part in human virtue because it has no relevant interaction with reason. As the *ergon* argument makes it plain, the human function is centred around reason. Echoing this conclusion, the line 1102b31 explicitly states that character takes part in reason *insofar as* it obeys reason. It amounts to saying that, in order to take part in the human *ergon*, the appetitive-and-in-general-desiring part, responsible for character, must follow reason. A character that is not in harmony with reason and does not follow its lead cannot be said a character that takes part in the proper human activity. That conclusion leaves no doubt that the role played by character in a virtuous soul is to be guided by reason. It is in this way that character fulfils its duty in the human *ergon*.

In passage (iii), Aristotle repeats the claim that the λόγον-ἔχον part of the soul is twofold. One part is said rational in the proper sense (κυρίως) and in itself (ἐν αὐτῷ) and the other like someone who listens to one’s father (ὥσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικόν τι). From the context, it is clear that the capacity which character listens to is reason. After that division, Aristotle says that virtues are classified in accordance with this distinction. If virtue is the excellent exercise of someone’s or something’s proper activity (*NE* 1106a15-24) and Aristotle makes clear that in the moral sphere the proper role of human beings’ character is to obey and listen to reason, then a virtuous activity of character is to obey and listen to reason.

The discussion of the *ergon* argument in conjunction with the classification of the virtues leaves no doubt that in a virtuous soul character does not have a leading role in proper human activity. Its share of contribution to the exercise of the proper human activity is presented by Aristotle in terms of its relation of obedience to reason, that is, insofar as it is guided by reason. In the next sections, I will show that *NE* I.7 and I.13 are not the only places in which Aristotle explicitly articulates this sort of interaction between character and reason in a virtuous soul. He consistently argues in favour of this view. All this demonstrates the importance of giving the due

attention to the passages where the interplay between character and reason is under discussion before addressing the goal passages.

3.4. The Wrong Way of Living

In the previous sections, I have shown that Aristotle gives reason a central role in a virtuous soul. As far as the pieces of evidence are concerned, he assigns to reason a leading role in the moral actions while character is left with the job of being responsive to reason. Leaving aside for the moment the possibility of a Humean reading of the goal passages, I will continue to show that Aristotle gives consistent and explicit signs in the *NE* that a life where the non-rational desiderative part of the soul conducts instead of being conducted in regard to the moral goals is to be avoided. On several occasions, he even criticizes harshly such a way of living.

Below I quote a passage in which Aristotle for the first time in the *NE* draws a distinction between living according to reason (κατὰ λόγον) and living according to emotion (κατὰ πάθος):

T3. διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατῆς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ' ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων· ἔτι δὲ τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκολουθητικὸς ὢν ματαίως ἀκούσεται καὶ ἀνωφελῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνώσις ἀλλὰ πράξις, διαφέρει δ' οὐδὲν νέος τὴν ἡλικίαν ἢ τὸ ἦθος νεαρός· οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὸν χρόνον ἢ ἔλλειψις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζῆν καὶ διώκειν ἕκαστα. τοῖς γὰρ τοιούτοις ἀνόνητος ἢ γνώσις γίνεται, καθάπερ τοῖς ἀκρατέσιν· τοῖς δὲ κατὰ λόγον τὰς ὀρέξεις ποιουμένοις καὶ πράττουσι πολυωφελὲς ἂν εἴη τὸ περὶ τούτων εἰδέναι (*NE* 1095a2-11, my emphasis).

This is why the young are not an appropriate audience for the political expert; for they are inexperienced in the actions that constitute life, and what is said will start from these and will be about these. What is more, because they have a tendency to be led by emotions it will be without point or use for them to listen, since the end is not knowing things but doing them. Nor does it make any difference whether a person is young in years or immature in character, for the deficiency is not a matter of time, but the result of *living by emotion* and going after things in that way. For having knowledge turns out to be without benefit to such people, as it is to those who lack self-control; whereas for those who *arrange their desires, and act, in accordance with reason*, it will be of great use to know about these things (my emphasis).

In this passage, Aristotle outlines the profile of his prospective student. He says that there are those who are young *in age* and those who are young *in character*. What he means by that is explained in the following lines. The feature that unifies these two sort of people is that both live *by emotion* (διὰ τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζῆν). For these people, the study of ethics proposed by Aristotle is not profitable because they will take no advantage from it for their moral life. And Aristotle's lessons have as their ultimate goal the action, not the mere knowledge about morals (*NE* 1103b26-30, 1179a35-b4). The passage above constitutes a clear evidence that a life guided by emotion, that

is, a life in which a character not guided by reason has the leading role⁹³, is far from being regarded by Aristotle as a virtuous way of living. He depicts this sort of life in disapproving terms. Aristotle defends that, for taking advantage from his classes, it is necessary *not* to live in accordance with emotions. The way Aristotle describes the group of people for whom his classes will be useful has particular relevance to my claim, for it is in line with what I have been arguing. He describes this group in the following way: those who arrange their desires, and act, in accordance with reason (τοῖς δὲ κατὰ λόγον τὰς ὀρέξεις ποιουμένοις καὶ πράττουσι). An important feature Aristotle's student must have is to be an individual who arranges his desires, and also acts, in accordance with reason. Once again Aristotle formulates in very explicit terms what he sees as being the desirable interaction between character and reason. For him, in a virtuous constitution of the soul the non-rational desiderative part, responsible for character, must be arranged (ποιουμένοις) by and must act (πράττουσι) according to reason. The passage below goes in the same direction:

T4. τὸ δ' ὄνομα τῆς ἀκολασίας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς παιδικὰς ἀμαρτίας φέρομεν· ἔχουσι γὰρ τινα ὁμοιότητα. πότερον δ' ἀπὸ ποτέρου καλεῖται, οὐθὲν πρὸς τὰ νῦν διαφέρει, δηλον δ' ὅτι τὸ ὕστερον ἀπὸ τοῦ προτέρου. οὐ κακῶς δ' ἔοικε μετενηνέχθαι· κεκολάσθαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸ τῶν αἰσχροῶν ὀρεγόμενον καὶ πολλὴν αὐξήσιν ἔχον, τοιοῦτον δὲ μάλιστα ἢ ἐπιθυμία καὶ ὁ παῖς· κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν γὰρ ζῶσι καὶ τὰ παιδιά, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τούτοις ἢ τοῦ ἡδέος ὀρέξεις. εἰ οὖν μὴ ἔσται εὐπειθὲς καὶ ὑπὸ τὸ ἄρχον, ἐπὶ πολὺ ἡξει· ἄπληστος γὰρ ἢ τοῦ ἡδέος ὀρέξεις καὶ πανταχόθεν τῷ ἀνοήτῳ, καὶ ἢ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐνέργεια αὐξήσει τὸ συγγενές, κἂν μεγάλα καὶ σφοδραὶ ᾄσι, καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν ἐκκρούουσιν. διὸ δεῖ μετρίας εἶναι αὐτὰς καὶ ὀλίγας, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ μὴθὲν ἐναντιοῦσθαι—τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον εὐπειθὲς λέγομεν καὶ κεκολασμένον—ὥσπερ δὲ τὸν παῖδα δεῖ κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα τοῦ παιδαγωγοῦ ζῆν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν κατὰ τὸν λόγον. διὸ δεῖ τοῦ σώφρονος τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν συμφωνεῖν τῷ λόγῳ· σκοπὸς γὰρ ἀμφοῖν τὸ καλόν, καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖ ὁ σώφρων ὧν δεῖ καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε· οὕτω δὲ τάττει καὶ ὁ λόγος. ταῦτ' οὖν ἡμῖν εἰρήσθω περὶ σωφροσύνης (NE 1119a33-b18).

The term 'intemperance' is one we also apply to the ways children go wrong, for these have a certain resemblance to intemperance. Which is called after which makes no difference for present purposes, but clearly the later is called after the earlier. Nor does the transfer of usage seem inappropriate; for least to be intemperate is the part of us that not only desires shameful things but can become big, and this characteristic belongs to appetite, and to child, above all – since children too live according to appetite, and the desire for the pleasant is strongest in them. If, then, whatever desires shameful things is not ready to obey and under the control of the ruling element, it will grow and grow, for the desire for the pleasant is insatiable and indiscriminate in a mindless person, and the activity of his appetite augments his congenital tendency; and if his appetites are strong and vigorous, they knock out his capacity for rational calculation as well. This is why they should be moderate and few, and offer no opposition to rational prescription (which is the sort of thing we mean by 'ready to obey' and 'not indulged'); for just as a child should conduct himself in accordance with what the slave in charge of him tells him to do, so too the appetitive in us should conduct itself in accordance with what reason prescribes. Hence in the temperate person the appetitive should be in harmony with reason; for the fine is goal for both, and the person with temperance has appetite for the things one should, in the way one should, and when – which is what reason also lays down. Let this, then, be our account of temperance.

⁹³ Here I am considering a kind of character that does not listen to reason and consequently does not act based on reason's command. In a life in which character listens to reason, living by character and living by reason are ultimately the same thing because living by character means in this case following what reason proposes as the goal to be pursued.

The initial discussion of the passage is about the use of the term ‘intemperance’ applied to children. Aristotle recognizes that in this case the use of the term bears some resemblance to its proper use, but he avoids discussing the details involved. In the sequence, he presents in unfavourable terms the appetitive part of the soul. In intemperate souls, appetite desires the shameful things and can become big. Aristotle alerts that, if this element is not ready to obey (εὐπειθής) and to be under the control of the ruling element (τὸ ἄρχον), it gets bigger. Given all the evidence gathered in the previous sections, it should be clear that the ruling element (τὸ ἄρχον) here is reason. But, even if this is not granted, the next lines of the text supports this interpretation. He describes appetite as insatiable (ἄπληστος) and indiscriminate (πανταχόθεν) in the case of those who are mindless (ἄνόητος). The word “ἄνόητος” is employed by Aristotle in order to make reference to those who, instead of following reason’s prescriptions, pursue frequently what appetite wants. Aristotle alerts for the danger of letting appetite increase and get stronger, for it prevents reason’s calculations from influencing actions. In what comes next, Aristotle spells out how he thinks the interaction between appetite and reason must be.

Aristotle defends that appetite, instead of being strong and indiscriminate, needs to be moderate (μέτριος) and few (ὀλίγος). In line with what was said in *NE* I.7 and I.13, he affirms that appetite should not oppose reason. The comparison brought by Aristotle reveals in more exact terms how he thinks appetite and reason must interact with each other. He says that appetite should behave in regard to reason in the same way as a child should conduct himself in accordance with the prescriptions of the person in charge of him. The example is clear in representing appetite under the authority of reason. Reason is depicted as the capacity to which should be assigned the task of guiding desire and prescribing what desire should pursue. As the passage makes it clear, the other way around is to be avoided.

In the temperate person, appetite and reason are in agreement. Both have in view the achievement of the fine. But Aristotle makes clear that it is not character that is responsible for guiding the action towards the fine. It is reason that lays down in which conditions the fine is pursued. Appetite desires what is prescribed by reason (τάττει καὶ ὁ λόγος) in the terms established by reason (ὧν δεῖ καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε). The passage articulates in explicit terms how the appetitive part of the soul must behave in a temperate soul and which role it plays. A life in accordance with appetite, following what is desired by it, is harshly criticized by Aristotle. The place of appetite in a virtuous life is under reason’s guidance, not the other way around.

While in the passage above the life of children is portrayed as highly influenced by appetite, in the next young people are depicted by Aristotle as being guided by emotions. In both

passages, the tone of reproach against a life in accordance with a non-rational part of the soul that does not listen to reason is very clear:

T5. οὐ πάση δ' ἡλικίᾳ τὸ πάθος ἀρμόζει, ἀλλὰ τῇ νέᾳ. οἴομεθα γὰρ δεῖν τοὺς τηλικούτους αἰδήμονας εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάθει ζῶντας πολλὰ ἀμαρτάνειν (*NE* 1128b16-18).
But the emotion is not fitting for every time of life, only for youth; for we think that young people should have a sense of shame because they live by emotion and so get many things wrong.

Once again Aristotle speaks against a life in which emotions plays the role of guiding the action. The emotions, not guided by reason, are regarded by him as bad counsellors in regard to actions. Due to the fact of living in accordance with them (διὰ τὸ πάθει ζῶντας), young people commit many mistakes. It is hard to understand how emotions could lead reason in the sense of choosing the moral goals to be pursued since Aristotle points out that a life in accordance to them is a life in which the individual will incur in many mistakes. Someone might argue that what is at stake in the passage above is the case in which the emotions, and consequently character, were not well trained and, in virtue of that, they pursue the wrong things. This is a good point, but there is also a good reply to it. In cases where emotions were well-trained and, therefore, pursue the virtuous things in the right way, it does so because it is guided by reason. The task of a virtuous character is to pursue what reason sees as right and in the way reason prescribes. The passage below helps us understand this point:

T6. φυσικωτάτη δ' ἔοικεν ἡ διὰ τὸν θυμὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσλαβοῦσα προαίρεσιν καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ἀνδρεία εἶναι. καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὴ ὀργιζόμενοι μὲν ἀλγοῦσι, τιμωρούμενοι δ' ἠδονται· οἱ δὲ διὰ ταῦτα μαχόμενοι μάχιμοι μὲν, οὐκ ἀνδρεῖοι δέ· οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὸ καλὸν οὐδ' ὡς ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διὰ πάθος· παραπλήσιον δ' ἔχουσί τι (*NE* 1117a4-9, my emphasis).
But the courage that comes about through anger does seem to be the most natural form, and to be courage once the factors of *prohairesis* and the end for the sake of which have been added. Human beings too, then, are distressed when angry, and take pleasure in retaliating; but people who fight from these motives are effective in fighting, not courageous, since they do not fight because of the fine, or as the correct reason directs, but *because of emotion*. But they do have something that resembles courage (my emphasis).

In that passage, Aristotle discusses the courageous actions based on anger (διὰ τὸν θυμὸν). This kind of action resembles courageous actions properly speaking but falls short of being included among them for some reasons. The main claim defended by Aristotle in the passage is that an action based on emotion (in the case above on anger) cannot be considered a virtuous action strictly speaking. For an action to be taken as a virtuous action strictly speaking, *prohairesis* and that for the sake of which (τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα) must be inherent in it. As *prohairesis* demands deliberation (*NE* 1113a2-4), it is clear that Aristotle is emphasizing here that the mere presence of anger, even

when it propels the individual to perform an action that seems courageous, is not able to make individuals perform a courageous action strictly speaking because *prohairesis* is a necessary requirement for a courageous action strictly speaking. It is important to remember that virtue of character itself is defined in terms of *prohairesis*⁹⁴. Virtue of character is called by Aristotle ἔξις προαιρετική. In regard to the expression “that for the sake of which” (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα), the passage makes clear that it stands for the idea of goal, what is to be pursued. Courageous actions based on anger miss the right goal. For Aristotle, the actions out of anger are not because of the fine (διὰ τὸ καλόν). These actions does not aim at the fine. However, having the fine as the aim of action is one of the requirements of proper virtuous action (see, for instance, *NE* 1115b12-13 and 1119b16-17). Additionally, Aristotle points out that courageous actions based on anger are not courageous strictly speaking also due to the fact that they are not as reason directs (ὡς ὁ λόγος). This remark makes clear that even a character that is well-trained in desires or that is naturally endowed with the right desiderative tendencies is unable to deliver proper virtuous actions if it is not guided by reason. Without the presence of reason, the non-rational desiderative part of the soul errs the goal to be aimed at and, moreover, does not perform an action out of *prohairesis*, failing in being an action out of a virtuous character.

Another argument against the objection raised above is that Aristotle says in *NE* VI.13 that natural virtue might be harmful because it does not involve *phronesis* (*NE* 1144b8-13)⁹⁵. This claim shows that actions based on emotion and, therefore, not guided by reason, are unable to safely guide the individuals towards acting virtuously.

On the basis of *NE* III.8 and VI.13, it seems, then, that actions based on emotions make us more prone to make mistakes and, moreover, does not provide us with the correct moral goals.

In the discussion about friendships based on pleasure, Aristotle highlights that friendship among young people seems to be for the sake of pleasure, for they live in accordance with emotions (κατὰ πάθος γὰρ οὗτοι ζῶσι) and, because of that, they mostly seek to obtain the present things and what is pleasant⁹⁶ (*NE* 1156a31-33). These remarks show that a life according to emotion (κατὰ πάθος) has pleasure as its central element, not the fine. Aristotle’s view becomes clearer in the next passage from the closing chapter of the *NE*. Aristotle presents in unfavourable terms those who guide their lives by emotion:

⁹⁴ I discuss the definition of virtue of character in chapter 4.

⁹⁵ This claim is discussed in details below in this chapter.

⁹⁶ “Friendship between young people seems to be because of pleasure, since the young live by emotion, and more than anything pursue what is pleasant for them and what is there in front of them” (ἡ δὲ τῶν νέων φιλία δι’ ἡδονὴν εἶναι δοκεῖ: κατὰ πάθος γὰρ οὗτοι ζῶσι, καὶ μάλιστα διώκουσι τὸ ἡδὺ αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ παρόν) (*NE* 1156a31-33).

T7. οὐ γὰρ πεφύκασιν αἰδοῖ πειθαρχεῖν ἀλλὰ φόβῳ, οὐδ' ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν φαύλων διὰ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας· πάθει γὰρ ζῶντες τὰς οικείας ἡδονὰς διώκουσι καὶ δι' ὧν αὐταὶ ἔσονται, φεύγουσι δὲ τὰς ἀντικειμένους λύπας, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡδέος οὐδ' ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, ἄγευστοι ὄντες (*NE* 1179b11-16).

For most people are not of the sort to be guided by a sense of shame but by fear and not to refrain from bad things on the grounds of their shamefulness but because of the punishments; living by emotion as they do, they pursue their own kinds of pleasures and the means to these, and shun the opposing pains, while not even having a conception of the fine and the truly pleasant, since they have had no taste of it.

Aristotle connects again the idea of living by emotion, without being guided by reason, with pursuing what is pleasant. A life lived for the sake of pleasure does not have the fine as the goal around which life is organized. Aristotle says that people living by emotion do not have even a conception of the fine. Here he does not assign to emotions the leading role in virtuous actions. What emerges from the text is a view that does not recommend a life in accordance to emotion, in cases where, I add, reason does not guide it. The following passage goes in the same direction:

T8. οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσειε λόγου ἀποτρέποντος οὐδ' αὖ συνείη ὁ κατὰ πάθος ζῶν· τὸν δ' οὕτως ἔχοντα πῶς οἷόν τε μεταπεῖσαι; ὅλως τ' οὐ δοκεῖ λόγῳ ὑπείκειν τὸ πάθος ἀλλὰ βία (*NE* 1179b26-29)

For the person who lives according to emotion will not listen to talk that tries to turn him away from it, nor again will he comprehend such talk; how will it be possible to persuade someone like this to change? And in general it is not talk that makes emotion yield but force.

The passage is within a context where Aristotle is discussing the power of reason and arguments to make people change their behaviours. More precisely, this passage deals with the difficulty of changing the behaviour of those living by emotion. Aristotle once again does not seem to consider that a life in accordance with emotion is one worth pursuing. If that were the case, he would not be talking about changing the behaviour of such a kind of people. Moreover, Aristotle has insistently argued in the *NE* that in a well-ordered soul character must listen to reason and in the passage above he states that those living by emotion are deaf to reason's arguments.

As far as the pieces of evidence are concerned, there is no doubt that Aristotle thinks that in a virtuous soul actions are not guided by the non-rational part of the soul, responsible for character. For him, the character's role is to follow reason in actions. As a result, whoever has a virtuously organized soul will not live by his non-rational part of the soul. In this kind of life, reason plays the leading role in moral actions.

3.5. *NE* IX.8: self-love and living by reason

The notion of self-love is particularly important for providing certain elements to discuss the labour division. The discussion of self-love is a valuable piece of evidence regarding the

role that should be played by reason in a virtuous soul. As I will show, the results achieved by this discussion are in line with what I have defended concerning the labour division.

NE IX.8 starts out by asking whether we should love ourselves mostly or someone else (*NE* 1168a28-29). Aristotle observes that those who love mostly themselves are object of reproach. This kind of people is labelled “self-lover” (φίλαυτος). In this case, the word is employed in a pejorative way and stands for a feature people should be ashamed of (*NE* 1168a29-30). One kind of individual that personifies this negative view of the self-lover is the bad person. The bad person is regarded as someone who puts himself above everyone else and acts only for his own sake (*NE* 1168a30-33). On the other hand, the good person is taken to act for the sake of the fine and might even put aside his own interests in some cases in order to act for the sake of a friend⁹⁷ (*NE* 1168a33-35). In the sequence, Aristotle raises a challenge to the view that acting for the sake of a friend amounts to acting by putting one’s interests aside. People say we should love mostly who is mostly our friend. And the person who is mostly a friend is the one who wishes someone’s good even if nobody never knows it (*NE* 1168b1-3). The problem is, Aristotle argues, that these features belong especially to our relation with ourselves (*NE* 1168b3-4). The implication is that we are mostly a friend of ourselves (μάλιστα γὰρ φίλος αὐτῷ) and that we must love mostly ourselves (φιλητέον δὴ μάλισθ’ ἑαυτόν) (*NE* 1169b9-10). As a result, the good person will act for his own sake because he is mostly his own friend and, at least in this regard, he does not seem to be different from the bad one. It seems that even the second kind of “self-lover” ends up sharing important features with those who are rightly called self-lovers in a pejorative way.

After raising the problem, Aristotle dedicates the rest of the chapter to discuss the aforementioned two uses of the word “self-lover” (φίλαυτος). Against the negative use, Aristotle defends a positive one, which, in his view, captures better what a true self-lover (φίλαυτος) is (*NE* 1168b28-29).

Aristotle points out that in a negative way the term “self-lover” is employed to make reference to those people who claim to themselves the larger share in matters of money, honours, or bodily pleasures (*NE* 1168b15-17). These people occupy themselves in eagerly pursuing these things as if they were the best things (ἄριστα) (*NE* 1168b17-19). For Aristotle, this kind of life is devoted to satisfy appetites (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις), emotions in general (ὅλως τοῖς πάθεσι), and the non-rational part of the soul (τῷ ἀλόγῳ τῆς ψυχῆς). All these characterizations portray a life that is guided by the fulfilment of the aims of the non-rational part of the soul responsible for character, in the cases in which character is not guided by reason. It is clear from Aristotle’s statements that such a life does not have as its primary aim the pursuit of the fine. This sort of life has as its objects of pursuit those

⁹⁷ For a discussion of the definition of friendship in *NE* VIII.2, see Zanuzzi 2010, p. 13-21.

things that satisfy its non-rational drives. Someone who is a self-lover along these terms is with justice object of reproach. Aristotle does not regard this sort of life as a model to be followed. A life in accordance with the non-rational element, that is, a life in which the non-rational element sets what is to be pursued, is far from being the paragon of virtuous life sought by Aristotle in the *NE*.

In the remainder of the chapter, Aristotle makes a case for a positive account of what a self-lover is. He observes that if an individual, who more than anyone else (αὐτὸς μάλιστα πάντων), sought eagerly to do the just things or the things that are temperate or all the others according to the virtue and, moreover, secured always the fine for himself, someone behaving in this way would be hardly called a self-lover and would not be object of reproach (*NE* 1168b25-28). But, contrary to this widespread view, Aristotle defends that this person seems to be more of (μᾶλλον εἶναι) a self-lover (*NE* 1168b28-29). In his defence of why this kind of person is more of a self-love, he says:

T9. δόξειε δ' ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος μᾶλλον εἶναι φίλαντος· ἀπονέμει γοῦν ἑαυτῷ τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαθὰ, καὶ χαρίζεται ἑαυτοῦ τῷ κυριωτάτῳ, καὶ πάντα τούτῳ πείθεται· ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ πόλις τὸ κυριώτατον μάλιστ' εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ πᾶν ἄλλο σύστημα, οὕτω καὶ ἄνθρωπος· καὶ φίλαντος δὴ μάλιστα ὁ τοῦτο ἀγαπᾶν καὶ τούτῳ χαριζόμενος. καὶ ἐγκρατῆς δὲ καὶ ἀκρατῆς λέγεται τῷ κρατεῖν τὸν νοῦν ἢ μή, ὡς τούτου ἐκάστου ὄντος· καὶ πεπραγῆναι δοκοῦσιν αὐτοὶ καὶ ἐκουσίως τὰ μετὰ λόγου μάλιστα. ὅτι μὲν οὖν τοῦθ' ἕκαστός ἐστιν ἢ μάλιστα, οὐκ ἄδηλον, καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἐπιεικῆς μάλιστα τοῦτ' ἀγαπᾷ. διὸ φίλαντος μάλιστ' ἂν εἴη, καθ' ἕτερον εἶδος τοῦ ὀνειδιζομένου, καὶ διαφέρων τοσοῦτον ὅσον τὸ κατὰ λόγον ζῆν τοῦ κατὰ πάθος, καὶ ὀρέγεσθαι ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ ἢ τοῦ δοκοῦντος συμφέρειν [...] τῷ μοχθηρῷ μὲν οὖν διαφωνεῖ ἃ δεῖ πράττειν καὶ ἃ πράττει· ὁ δ' ἐπιεικῆς, ἃ δεῖ, ταῦτα καὶ πράττει· πᾶς γὰρ νοῦς αἰρεῖται τὸ βέλτιστον ἑαυτῷ, ὁ δ' ἐπιεικῆς πειθαρχεῖ τῷ νῷ (*NE* 1168b28-1169a6, 1169a15-18).

But this sort of person would seem to be more of a self-lover; at any rate he assigns the finest things, the ones that are most good, to himself and indulges the most authoritative element of himself, obeying it in everything; and just as a city, too, or any other composite whole, seems to be its most authoritative element, so with man. Thus 'self-lover' applies most to the one who cherishes this, and indulges this. Again, people are called enkratic or akratic by reference to whether intelligence is in control or not, which suggests that this is what each of us is, or this most of all, is quite clear, and also that this is what the decent sort of person cherishes most. Hence he will count as 'self-lover' the most – not the same kind people speak of censoriously, but different by as much as living by reason differs from living by emotion, and desiring the fine, on the one hand, from desiring what appears to bring advantage on the other [...] For the bad person, then, there is discord between what he should do and what he does, whereas with the decent one, what he should do is what he does, since every intelligence chooses what is best for itself, and the good person obeys the commands of intelligence.

In this passage, the use of the word “self-lover” defended by Aristotle basically portrays the life of a virtuous individual. A life guided by what is fine. In this life the most authoritative element of human beings, that is, reason, occupies a central place in the organization of life. It is interesting the remark made by Aristotle that what distinguishes enkrateia from akrasia is the fact of reason being or not in control respectively. When reason commands, the person is regarded as being in control and is called enkratic. When emotions are in the control of the actions, the person is

regarded as not being in control and is called akratic. This view shows that there is an underlying assumption that reason is what mostly characterizes us. Reason is what we mostly are (*NE* 1168b35-1169a3). The *ergon* argument had already shown that a proper human life is one which is lived for the sake of and based on reason's activity. So it should come as no surprise the claim that the good person (ὁ ἐπιεικῆς) cherishes mostly this part of him. The proper human life resides in the activity of this part of the soul. In Aristotle's view, this second kind of self-lover then is more properly a self-lover than the first and they differ insofar as one lives according to emotions and the other according to reason. The first seeks what seems to bring advantage; the second, the fine. This distinction here is fundamental because it is behind the contrast made by Aristotle between the life based on reason (τὸ κατὰ λόγον ζῆν) and the life based on emotions (τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζῆν)⁹⁸. The life based on emotion should be avoided. The life worth pursuing and which aims at the fine is the life by reason. The life based on emotion organizes the moral objects of pursuit not towards the fine, but towards what is advantageous.

In the last sentence of passage T9, Aristotle repeats what was already defended in *NE* I.13: the good person obeys reason (ὁ δ' ἐπιεικῆς πειθαρχεῖ τῷ νῷ) (*NE* 1169a17-18). It does not seem plausible to consider that the good person obeys reason only in regard to the means of actions while the non-rational desiderative part of the soul in regard to the goals. The possibility of following this non-rational part of the soul in a life devoted to the fine was already discarded by Aristotle, as we have seen. To corroborate this view, we just need to appeal to the statement that says that what chooses the best for individuals is reason (πᾶς γὰρ νοῦς αἰρεῖται τὸ βέλτιστον ἑαυτῷ) (*NE* 1169a17). There is no reason to assign to Aristotle a restrictive view about the role played by reason in moral actions.

As should be clear by now, the discussion about self-love addresses some issues that are fundamental to the labour division. In the discussion about self-love, Aristotle's claims go against any view that tries to subordinate reason to character's choices. Aristotle denies that a life according to the non-rational desiderative part of the soul, when not guided by reason, might have as its aim the fine, the ultimate value to be pursued in a virtuous life. The conclusions presented by the discussion are also in harmony with the results attained in *NE* I.7 and I.13. In these two chapters Aristotle defends a life organized around reason's activity. The role to be played by the non-rational desiderative part of the soul responsible for character in a well-organized soul is to listen to reason. In the discussion of self-love, Aristotle takes up again these claims and advances more in the discussion. He shows once again that a life in accordance to reason is the right kind of life to be pursued.

⁹⁸ The opposition between "κατὰ λόγον" and "κατὰ πάθος" is also found in 1095a8-10.

3.6. *NE VI.5: temperance preserves phronesis*

Finally, I turn my attention to passages that are traditionally taken to give a definitive account of the labour division. Most of these passages are found in *NE VI*, especially in the two last chapters of this book. The main challenge these passages present to the interpretation I have defended so far is that at their face value they seem to claim that character plays the role of setting the moral goals. I make an effort to show that this face-value interpretation is not the most adequate way of taking Aristotle's claims. When the goal passages are put in the wider argumentative context of the *NE*, Humean interpretations of these passages are not as cogent as they seem to be at first glance. An important result of the interpretation I will defend is that my interpretation is in harmony with Aristotle's view that reason has the central role in a virtuous life and guides character in the moral actions.

An important passage to start the discussion is found in *NE VI.5*. In this passage, Aristotle advances certain claims about the interplay between virtue of character and *phronesis*:

T10. ἔνθεν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην τούτῳ προσαγορευόμεν τῷ ὀνόματι, ὡς σφύζουσιν τὴν φρόνησιν. σφύζει δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην ὑπόληψιν. οὐ γὰρ ἅπασαν ὑπόληψιν διαφθείρει οὐδὲ διαστρέφει τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ λυπηρόν, οἷον ὅτι τὸ τρίγωνον δύο ὀρθὰς ἔχει ἢ οὐκ ἔχει, ἀλλὰ τὰς περὶ τὸ πρακτόν. αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαὶ τῶν πρακτῶν τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα τὰ πρακτά· τῷ δὲ διεφθαρμένῳ δι' ἡδονὴν ἢ λύπην εὐθὺς οὐ φαίνεται ἀρχή, οὐδὲ δεῖν τούτου ἔνεκεν οὐδὲ διὰ τοῦθ' αἰρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν· ἔστι γὰρ ἡ κακία φθαρτικὴ ἀρχὴς (*NE* 1140b11-20).
That is why we give *sōphrosunē* ['temperance'] its name, as something that *sōzei tēn phronēsin* ['preserves *phronesis*']. And it does preserve the sort of belief in question. What is pleasant and painful does not corrupt, or distort, every sort of belief, e.g. that the internal angles of a triangle do or do not add up to two right angles, only beliefs in the sphere of action. For the principles of the actions are that for the sake of which the actions are; to whom is corrupted through pleasure or pain, the principle does not appear, nor that we should choose everything, and act, for the sake of this, and because of this – for badness is corruptive of the principle.

It is not an easy task to understand the details of this passage, which might give rise to interpretations that endorse a Humean take on the labour division (see, for instance, Moss 2012, p. 174-175, 182-183) and also to interpretations that go against a Humean take (see, for instance, Allan 1977, p. 76-77). One of the central issues is related to how we should understand the claim that temperance⁹⁹ preserves *phronesis*.

One possible interpretation of the passage is to defend that, without a good character in regard to pleasures and pains, reason's correct beliefs about the actions to be done will be corrupted

⁹⁹ I think the word "temperance" here is employed by Aristotle in a broader way (see Broadie 2002, p. 368). The word makes reference to character. A virtuous character is one that keeps the non-rational desires under control and obedient to reason (*NE* 1104b12-16, 22-24) as well as temperance does it in the case of the non-rational desires related to the pleasures of food, drink, and sex.

by the non-rational desires. In this case, the task of a good character is to preserve reason's correct beliefs by not allowing the individual to be led astray in regard to his right goals because of pleasure and pain. This sort of interpretation is defended by Allan (1977, p. 77): "it is therefore possible, and sometimes convenient, to speak of *sôphrosunê* as preserving a true opinion about the good, without suggesting for a moment that virtue can, from its own resources, provide a conception of the good". In commenting on the passage, Irwin (1999, p. 243) stresses that the persistence in performing wrong actions has the power of changing one's mind about the wrongness of certain actions: "here Aristotle suggests that repeated mistaken indulgences in the wrong pleasures will result in our losing our belief in their wrongness". The virtuous organization of the non-rational desires displayed by a good character makes individuals not avoid pain when it is shameful to do so, as well as not being attracted by base pleasure. In this interpretation, although character is still responsible for preserving *phronesis*' moral suppositions, it is still a rational capacity that sets the moral goals¹⁰⁰.

To accommodate the passage within a Humean interpretative framework, Moss provides the following account of it (2012, p. 182-183):

But the claim is in fact more complex: having the supposition of an end *x* preserved means both (i) having *x* appear to you, and also (ii) knowing that you should be acting for the sake of *x*. We can maintain consistency with the Goal passages, and at the same time explain the idea that temperance "preserves" *phronesis*, if we take it that Aristotle means to attribute (i) to virtue and (ii) to *phronesis*. It is character that ensures (i), making one aware of the content of the end – that one should act finely, or that one should save the drowning baby, or whatever it may be. What *phronesis* adds is the right "supposition of the end," where this means, as I argued above, being aware of it as an end, i.e. using it to guide deliberation – or as Aristotle puts it here, (ii) being aware that one should "choose and do everything for the sake of and on account of it." Even though (i) is a function of character it is necessary for *phronesis*, for without having something as one's end in the first place one of course cannot use it to guide deliberation.

Moss understands Aristotle's claim that the starting point does not appear to those corrupted by pleasure as implying that the principle is given by character. Character provides the individual with the moral goals. In her account, the word "ἀρχή" is taken to mean "moral goal", the target of the moral action. It is the good character that makes the goal appear. It is important to highlight that, in the context above, Aristotle is clearly concerned with the appearance of the *right* goal, not any goal. A character corrupted by pleasure is unable to set the right goals. According to

¹⁰⁰ Moss gives an accurate description of the strategies that try to avoid the claim that virtue of character gives the moral goals: "to someone corrupted by pleasure or pain, straightaway the starting-point [i.e. the proper end] does not appear" (V/VI.5 1140b11-20): this allegedly shows that virtue "makes the goal right" only in that the appetites and passions which constitute character determine whether or not the end, which is dictated by intellect, is "preserved" – i.e., whether or not the agent keeps it as an end. Either (a) virtue ensures that one will want the goal which one intellectually judges best, or (b) virtue preserves that goal in that non-virtuous desires would prompt intellect to change its view of what is best" (Moss 2012, p. 174).

Moss, the appearance of the right moral goal is a task carried out by a virtuous character. The task assigned to *phronesis* is to become aware of the content of the end chosen by character and use it to guide deliberation.

In my view, the two interpretations above are unsatisfactory. The first assumes that bad desires has the power to *undermine* one's right supposition of the goal in the long run. Against this view it can be said that Aristotle himself recognizes that the enkratics are individual who have bad desires (*NE* 1102b13-28, 1151b34-1152a3) and, even so, they know what is the right thing to be done and, more importantly, act in accordance with what they think is the best thing to be done. Moreover, their condition is said to be a moral disposition (*NE* 1146a14, 1150a13-16, 1151a27-28, 1151b28-30, 1152a25-27, 1152a34-36)¹⁰¹. They are consistent in their way of acting. All this amounts to the fact that bad desires neither warp *irretrievably* the possibility of rationally choosing a right goal while having bad appetites nor prevent the individual from acting in accordance to this right goal. The second interpretation goes against what I have argued to be the most basic tenet of Aristotle's ethics: a virtuous human life should be organized around reason. In Moss' interpretation, the ends of moral life are structured by a well-ordered set of non-rational desires, represented by the notion of a good character.

In her comments about what is the principle (*ἀρχή*) that appears (*φαίνεται*) to the agent, Broadie says that Aristotle is talking about general moral principles. According to her, he has in mind things like "do what's best" (Broadie 2002, p. 369). Irwin proposes in his comments that what Aristotle has in mind is the ultimate end, that is, the "agent's conception of the final good, i.e., of happiness" (1999, p. 243). The passage is not clear about how exactly to take "*ἀρχή*", but it seems that the passage is related to moral principles that are grasped by the virtuous agent and for the sake of which he acts. Both Broadie's and Irwin's interpretation accepts this view, the disagreement lies only in how to specify this principle. For my interpretative purpose, it is enough to assume that Aristotle is talking about a propositional moral content that prescribes how to act. Note, however, that what is at issue in the passage is not only the fact that this moral content is available to the virtuous agent but also that he makes his moral choices and *acts* based on it (*αἰρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν*). This implies that the verb "*φαίνεται*" cannot be taken in a mere cognitive sense of the moral content being available to the agent. The agent must also be in agreement with this content, which must result in actions accordingly.

Someone might eventually argue that the principle of action is also available to the enkratic individual because, although he has bad desires (*NE* 1102b13-28, 1145b13-14, and

¹⁰¹ In the case of *akrasia*, Mendonça seems to take it as a disposition (*ἕξις*): "Aristóteles concebe a *akrasia* como uma *habilitação (hexis) voluntária*" (2014, p. 87).

1151b34-1152a3), and in some sense can be said to have the non-rational desires corrupted, he acts according to his reason, following the correct prescription. My reply is that indeed the enkratic individual not only has the correct principle of action but also acts based on it. Therefore, we can say that the principle appears (φαίνεται ἀρχή) to him. However, given how the passage is construed, Aristotle seems to have in view a contrast between the virtuous and vicious agents. When he makes reference to the individual corrupted by pleasure and pain (τῷ δὲ διεφθαρμένῳ δι' ἡδονὴν ἢ λύπην), he is strictly considering the vicious person, which has excessive non-rational desires, not any individual who has wrong non-rational desires, like the akratic and enkratic. Aristotle is not interested in these two sorts of individuals in the passage. Understanding this restriction in his argument is important to avoid the difficulty that arises in the case of the enkratic individual, who formulates and acts based on correct moral principles, although he does not perform actions that are virtuous strictly speaking, once he does not fulfil at least the third requirement of proper virtuous actions listed in *NE* 1105a31-33¹⁰².

In the case of the vicious individual, Aristotle makes clear in a passage discussed above that when the non-rational desires are strong (μεγάλοι) and excessive (σφοδραὶ), they knock out (ἐκκρούουσιν) reason (*NE* 1119b10). Because of this, he recommends in the sequence that the desires must be moderate (μέτριος) and few (ὀλίγος) (*NE* 1119b11). The lesson this passage teaches us is that the excessive pleasures of the vicious person must be avoided because it has a negative impact on reason's work to grasp and make the agent act according to the right principles of action. This also holds about the passage under discussion. Taken in this way, the passage T10 provides no support to a Humean interpretation.

¹⁰² For a discussion of the details involved in the third requirement of proper virtuous actions, see Spinelli 2013, 351-352.

3.7. *NE* VI.12-13: a different approach

The last two chapters of *NE* VI have been traditionally seen as the place where Aristotle finally explains how the interaction between *phronesis* and virtue of character must be understood in regard to the labour division. This sort of approach, however, seems to ignore certain important aspects of Aristotle's argumentative strategy. One of them is to overlook the wider context in which the chapters take place. As I hope to have clearly shown, the interaction between character and reason is a topic that Aristotle discusses on different occasions in the *NE*. It even plays a crucial role in the formulation of the *ergon* argument because the proper activity of human beings rests ultimately on how the interplay between character and reason must be. It sounds to me more reasonable to assume that the two last chapters of *NE* VI needs to be understood in this wider context. They are not the starting point and perhaps not even the central texts of the labour division.

Another aspect is related to the argumentative strategy of these two chapters. At the beginning of *NE* VI.12, Aristotle raises some puzzles related to the usefulness of *phronesis* and wisdom. They are solved throughout the two last chapters of book VI. The principal aim of these two chapters is to provide answers to these puzzles. Aristotle is primarily concerned with these puzzles and ends up touching upon issues related to the labour division. Because of this argumentative strategy adopted by Aristotle, it is more reasonable to downplay our expectations about the results the chapter can deliver and adopt the position that the discussion of the labour division at the end of book VI is constrained by the puzzles proposed by Aristotle to deal with issues related to the usefulness of *phronesis* and wisdom. An important conclusion to be drawn from this aspect of *NE* VI.12-13 is that these chapters were not designed to give a detailed account of the labour division, even though they end up making important claims about it.

In order to start our discussion of the two last chapters of book VI, let me quote the opening paragraph of *NE* VI.12, a place where Aristotle raises some puzzles related to the usefulness of *phronesis*:

T11. [...] ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τοῦτο [θεωρήσει ἐξ ὧν ἔσται εὐδαίμων ἄνθρωπος] μὲν ἔχει, ἀλλὰ τίνος ἕνεκα δεῖ αὐτῆς; εἴπερ ἡ μὲν φρόνησις ἐστὶν ἢ περὶ τὰ δίκαια καὶ καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἄνθρωπον, ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ἃ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστὶν ἄνδρὸς πράττειν, οὐδὲν δὲ πρακτικώτεροι τῶν εἰδέναι αὐτὰ ἔσμεν, εἴπερ ἕξεις αἱ ἀρεταὶ εἰσιν, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ τὰ ὑγιεινὰ οὐδὲ τὰ εὐεκτικά, ὅσα μὴ τῶν ποιεῖν ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἕξεως εἶναι λέγεται· οὐθὲν γὰρ πρακτικώτεροι τῶν ἔχειν τὴν ἰατρικὴν καὶ γυμναστικὴν ἔσμεν. εἰ δὲ μὴ τούτων χάριν φρόνιμον ῥητέον ἀλλὰ τοῦ γίνεσθαι, τοῖς οὖσι σπουδαίοις οὐθὲν ἂν εἴη χρήσιμος· ἔτι δ' οὐδὲ τοῖς μὴ ἔχουσιν· οὐδὲν γὰρ διοίσει αὐτοὺς ἔχειν ἢ ἄλλοις ἔχουσι πείθεσθαι, ἰκανῶς τ' ἔχει ἂν ἡμῖν ὥσπερ καὶ περὶ τὴν ὑγίειαν· βουλόμενοι γὰρ ὑγιαίνειν ὅμως οὐ μανθάνομεν ἰατρικὴν (*NE* 1143b15-33).
[...] *phronesis* may have this feature [to reflect on any of the things that make a human being happy], but what do we need it for, if in fact *phronesis* has to do with the things that are just and fine and good for human beings, and these are the ones that the good man characteristically does – and knowledge of them does not make us any more doers of them, given that the virtues are dispositions; just as with things relating to health, or things

relating to physical fitness (i.e. the ones to which the terms apply not because they produce but because they flow from the disposition), for we are no more doers of those things by virtue of possessing expertise in medicine and athletic training. And if we are to say that being *phronimos* is useful not for this, but with a view to our becoming doers of good things, then it will not be of any use to those who already are good; and further, *phronesis* won't even be useful for those who don't have it, since it will make no difference whether they have it themselves or listen to others who do – and that will suffice for us, just as it does in the case of health: even though we wish to be healthy we don't learn how to be doctors.

In this passage, Aristotle raises some objections that could be made against the usefulness of *phronesis*. There is an important aspect about the use of the word “*phronesis*” in the passage that cannot go unnoticed. The potential objector to which Aristotle gives voice misunderstands the concept of *phronesis* and formulates it in an inadequate way. As I will show, Aristotle elucidates the concept of *phronesis* through the resolution of the puzzles. The potential objector associates in a very loose way *phronesis* to knowledge about what is just, fine, and good for human beings. Part of Aristotle's efforts in the replies is to elucidate what is in fact involved in *phronesis*' knowledge and to show how it is a fundamental element in the performance of virtuous actions.

In the first objection, *phronesis*' knowledge is questioned over its power to make individuals engage in virtuous actions. According to the objection, *phronesis*' knowledge seems to be insufficient for leading to the performance of virtuous actions. The possession of knowledge about what is good does not seem to make people act in better ways. Virtuous actions are performed by those who are already good. The conclusion drawn is that either the individual is already good and performs virtuous actions or the individual is not good and *phronesis*' knowledge will have no practical contribution to him. The fact that someone knows which things are good does not make this person more able to perform virtuous actions because virtue is a disposition and virtuous actions are out of a virtuous disposition.

An important aspect which we should be careful about is what the word “ἀρετή” stands for in the passage. In many contexts in the *NE*, Aristotle employs this word to make reference to “virtue of character”. In the passage at hand, however, the puzzles are raised from the perspective of a potential objector¹⁰³, whose views will be shown not to be completely on the right track by Aristotle. Because of this perspective, the word “ἀρετή” must not be taken in the more specific way employed by Aristotle in the *NE*¹⁰⁴, in the sense of “virtue of character”. In the formulation of the puzzles, the potential objector seems to have another use in mind in which virtue simply is that which makes someone virtuous. Aristotle agrees with this use, but this is not the only one that he

¹⁰³ This is confirmed by the opening of *NE* VI.12 (1143b18): “Διαπορήσειε δ' ἄν τις”.

¹⁰⁴ In his translation, Ross assumes that “ἀρετή” means virtue of character: “[...] and we are none the more able to act for knowing them if the virtues are states of character” (Ross revised by Lesley, 2009).

does of “ἀρετή” in the *NE*. In the objection, virtue is taken *only* in the way of being a disposition that is enough to ensure the performance of virtuous actions. If someone has virtue, then this person is already virtuous and is able to perform virtuous actions. In this context, the following question makes complete sense: why does someone need to have *phronesis* if he already has virtue and, therefore, is already virtuous? This kind of question becomes a serious philosophical problem when we assume that the word “ἀρετή” is employed *only* in a general way, forgetting Aristotle’s use of “ἀρετή” as virtue of character. As virtuous actions are out of a virtuous disposition, *phronesis*’ knowledge about what is good seems to be irrelevant from a practical perspective because what matters for the performance of virtuous actions is the possession of a virtuous disposition, not *phronesis*’ knowledge. As I will argue, Aristotle solves this problem by showing that there are two ways of understanding the word “ἀρετή”, which are not in conflict.

The examples brought to illustrate the view of the potential objector shed some light on these matters. In the case of health and physical fitness, the objector argues that what makes us call someone as having health and physical fitness is the fact that the person has a bodily condition that can be recognized as healthy or as having physical fitness. These conditions are said out of a disposition (ἀπὸ τῆς ἕξεως). Therefore, neither is the mere possession of expertise in medicine and athletic training enough to the possession of health or physical fitness nor is the fact that the person makes healthy things or makes bodily exercises, but uniquely the fact that the person has a bodily condition that can be recognized as healthy or as having physical fitness. Someone can make healthy things and still have an ill condition. On the basis of these remarks, the objector goes further and argues that, if someone has *phronesis* and, therefore, knowledge about the good things but does not already possess a virtuous disposition, neither are his actions virtuous nor is he.

If we agree with the arguments raised in the puzzles, we must draw the conclusion that *phronesis* and its knowledge about the good things have no usefulness to the performance of virtuous actions. It seems that there is no place for *phronesis* in the life of those who already have virtue (ἀρετή) and who already are good (ἀγαθός). The potential objector, however, still has some puzzles to raise. Perhaps, what should be said is that *phronesis* is useful to becoming virtuous. In this case, we would have to agree that *phronesis* has no value to those who are already virtuous. However, even in the case it is agreed that the value of *phronesis* derives from helping people in their path to virtue, why should those who are not yet virtuous have themselves *phronesis* if they may rely on the advice of those who have it? In the case of health, people do not become doctors in order to be healthy but rely on the opinion of those who have expertise on this topic. Why should it be different in the case of *phronesis*? This last objection throws doubts even on the usefulness of having *phronesis* to those who are in their path to becoming virtuous.

The objections above call into question the contribution that *phronesis* may give to an *eudaimon* life. The puzzles raised make an effort to show that *phronesis*' knowledge is unnecessary for an *eudaimon* life. It is important to keep it in mind because Aristotle's replies in the sequence aim to address especially issues related to *phronesis*' usefulness. His primary investigative concern is not with the labour division. He is mainly interested in showing that *phronesis* is part of an *eudaimon* life and plays an important role in it. However, *phronesis* is able to perform this job only with the collaboration of virtue of character.

3.8. Making the Goal Right and Setting the Goal: a distinction

The first controversial remark about the labour division is found in *NE* 1144a6-9:

T12. ἔτι τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον.
Again, the *ergon* is brought to completion by virtue of a person's having *phronesis* and virtue of character; for virtue makes the goal correct, while *phronesis* makes what leads to it correct.

A minor but important detail in this passage is that Aristotle does not use only the word “ἀρετή”, as he does in many parts of the *NE*. He adds to this word the adjective “ἠθικός”. In the formulation of the puzzles, he left this adjective out. In the first appearance of the word “ἀρετή” after the formulation of the puzzles it comes along with the adjective “ἠθική”. In the remainder of the discussion in the two last chapters of book VI, the word will be employed again without being followed by the adjective “ἠθική” in most of its occurrences (see, for instance, *NE* 1144a20, 22, 30, 1144b1-2, 25, 1145a5). The only exception is found in line 1144b32, where the expression “ἠθικὴ ἀρετή” is employed again. In this occurrence, Aristotle wants to make clear that he is using the word “ἀρετή” in terms of “virtue of character” after a discussion (*NE* 1144b17-32) in which the word “ἀρετή” is employed in different ways. The word “ἀρετή” is mainly used in the *NE* as a shorthand for “ἠθικὴ ἀρετή”¹⁰⁵. The use of the whole expression in the passage T12 is important because the word “ἀρετή” was employed in a different way in the formulation of the puzzles. In the puzzles, Aristotle did not seem to be committed to his notion of virtue of character when the word “ἀρετή” was put in the mouth of a potential objector. There, the word “ἀρετή” seems to stand for that through which someone is good and has an *eudaimon* life. In what comes next, Aristotle tries to show that the human virtue consists of virtue of character and *phronesis*. The former does not come about without the latter.

¹⁰⁵ See footnote 2.

In passage T12, Aristotle is concerned with the completion of the human *ergon*. The dominant concern of the chapter is to show that wisdom and *phronesis* promote an *eudaimon* life (*NE* 1143b18-21). Moreover, the lines coming right after passage T12 deal with the promotion of *eudaimonia* through wisdom (*NE* 1144a4-6). In the practical sphere, the completion of the human *ergon* is carried out through a combination of virtue of character and *phronesis*. This claim is hardly open to divergences. The problems arise when we try to pin down what Aristotle intended to say with the division of tasks put forward in the passage.

In what could be called a *prima-facie* interpretation of the passage, Aristotle's statements are taken to be saying that virtue of character sets the goal (σκοπός) while *phronesis* is responsible for the things related to it (τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον). If this interpretation is endorsed, we end up being committed to a Humean interpretation of the labour division¹⁰⁶. Given all the pieces of evidence I have shown against this sort of interpretation, the first thing to be done is to resist such an approach. I think the passage may be construed without being at odds with the claims that character has to be obedient to reason and that the leading role in action should be assigned to reason.

The Humean interpretation works out only if one crucial assumption is granted. The assumption is that Aristotle establishes in the passage a rigid division of tasks: virtue of character *only* takes care of the goals while *phronesis only* of the things related to the goals. The consequence is that neither of them has anything to do with what belongs to the sphere of responsibility of the other. In this interpretation, Aristotle's statements are taken to be assigning *exclusive* responsibilities to virtue of character and *phronesis*. As far as I can see, the claim that virtue of character makes the goal right (ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν) does not need to be necessarily seen as advancing the stronger claim that character sets the goal. Aristotle's claim can also be understood in other terms. A way out of the Humean interpretation is to take Aristotle's claim to be saying that what virtue of character does is to make character desire the correct goal. In other words, virtue of character's function is to ensure that character will aim at the right goal, in contrast to a non-virtuous character, which aims at wrong goals. In this case, Aristotle is not saying that the goal is *chosen* by virtue of character. Virtue of character only *directs* character to the right goal and it does not exclude the possibility of this goal having been chosen by another capacity, for instance, reason. This is why it is important not to interpret the passage as providing a rigid division of tasks. The goal desired by character may determine the action, as the cases of *akrasia* and *vice* make it clear;

¹⁰⁶ This sort of interpretation is defended by Moss when she quotes the passage under discussion along with *NE* 1145a4-6, a passage I discuss later: "so Aristotle says, and he confirms the claim in passages which evidently restrict practical reasoning to working out how to achieve ends, while assigning the setting of the ends themselves to character" (2012, p. 157).

the case of *enkrateia*, however, shows that, even when character aims at a wrong goal, reason may make individuals go in the right direction and do the right thing. This is a plausible reason for assuming that Aristotle's claim does not intend to assign exclusively to character the task of setting the moral goals. The claim that virtue of character makes the goal right is a way to say that, when individuals have a virtuous character, their characters desire the right goals. Character, however, is not the only capacity that prompts someone to act in a certain way. Understood in this way, Aristotle's claim no longer favours a Humean interpretation. In saying that *phronesis* has under its responsibility the things related to the goal, Aristotle does not restrict *phronesis*' work to this task. He only emphasizes a fundamental task carried out by it and which virtue of character is unable to perform. When I turn my attention to the initial discussion of *NE* VI.13, it will become clear that character is unable to aim at the right goal without reason.

3.9. Virtue Makes *Prohairesis* Right: an anti-Humean interpretation

In the sequence, Aristotle tries to answer the objection that *phronesis* does not make individuals more able to perform the fine and just actions (*NE* 1144a11-13). The answer given by Aristotle is complex and can be divided into two parts. The first takes up the lines 1144a13-b1 and is focused on the role played by *phronesis* in the task of granting the achievement of the goal. The second takes up the lines 1144b1-17 and is focused on the practical importance of *phronesis* to virtue of character. In his replies, Aristotle advances some claims about the interplay between virtue of character and *phronesis* and articulates in better terms how the labour division should be taken.

At the beginning of the first part, Aristotle brings back to the discussion the claim that a virtuous person is not someone who only performs what can be externally described as a virtuous action but who also performs his actions by being in a certain condition (τὸ πῶς ἔχοντα) (*NE* 1144a18). In *NE* II.4, Aristotle claimed that the performance of properly virtuous actions requires the fulfilment of three requirements: knowledge, right motivation, and stability¹⁰⁷. Given his argumentative purpose, Aristotle retrieves in *NE* VI.12 only the second requirement. He claims:

T13. ὡς ἔοικεν, ἔστι τὸ πῶς ἔχοντα πράττειν ἕκαστα ὥστ' εἶναι ἀγαθόν, λέγω δ' οἷον διὰ προαίρεσιν καὶ αὐτῶν ἕνεκα τῶν πραττομένων. τὴν μὲν οὖν προαίρεσιν ὀρθὴν ποιῆ ἢ ἀρετὴ, τὸ δ' ὅσα ἐκείνης ἕνεκα πέφυκε πράττεσθαι οὐκ ἔστι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀλλ' ἐτέρας δυνάμεως (*NE* 1144a18-22).

It seems that one must be in a certain condition when one does each of the things to be good, I mean, e.g. doing them because of *prohairesis*, and for the sake of the things being done themselves. The *prohairesis*, then, is made correct by virtue, but the doing of whatever by the nature of the things has to be done to realize that *prohairesis* is not the business of virtue but of another capacity.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the three requirements for the virtuous actions strictly speaking, see Spinelli 2013.

In that passage, Aristotle shows us how virtue of character and *phronesis* are related to *prohairesis*. Given that he is interested here in the *prohairesis* that is the result of these two virtues, we should see his discussion as restricted to the *prohairesis* virtuous individuals have. In a Humean interpretation of the passage, the claim that character makes *prohairesis* correct is seen as if Aristotle were saying that character did this job by providing the goal involved in *prohairesis*. This cannot be the case, however. In *NE* III.2, Aristotle claimed that the enkratic individuals act on *prohairesis* (*NE* 1111b14-15), even though their non-rational desiderative part of soul, responsible for character, tries to draw them in a different direction (*NE* 1102b13-25). If the enkratic individual is able to pursue the right goal in spite of this part of the soul pushing him forward in a different direction, it sounds highly unlikely to assume that, when Aristotle claims above that *prohairesis* is made correct by virtue (τὴν μὲν οὖν προαίρεσιν ὀρθὴν ποιεῖ ἡ ἀρετή), what he intends to say is that virtue of character does it by setting the moral goal while *phronesis* is in charge of figuring out the ways of achieving it. Although Aristotle seeks to establish a contrast between the roles played by both virtues, I do not think this contrast should be understood along these lines. When Aristotle says that virtue of character makes *prohairesis* right, he wants to say that virtue of character also gives its share of contribution to the formation of a virtuous *prohairesis*. However, he does not explain what its contribution is and how it happens in *that* passage. The discussion about practical truth in *NE* VI.2 can give us some help.

In his investigation into practical truth, Aristotle seems to be especially interested in giving a detailed characterization of what he calls virtuous *prohairesis* (ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία) (*NE* 1139a25)¹⁰⁸. The good action (εὐπραξία) is dependent on a good *prohairesis* (*NE* 1139a33-35). Aristotle says that a good *prohairesis* is the result of reason and character (*NE* 1139a33-35) and he insists on the fact that a good *prohairesis* demands reason and desire (*NE* 1139a23-24, 29-31, 32-33, b4-5). All these claims are in line with Aristotle's general view about how the interaction between character and reason must be in a virtuous soul. Moreover, one important claim of the passage is that actions performed by virtuous individuals must have their origin in a ἕξις προαιρετική in which virtue of character and *phronesis* have a contribution to give (*NE* 1139a22-25, see also 1106b36-1107a2). Which share of contribution each virtue gives is not clear. There is a

¹⁰⁸ The passage might be taken to be characterizing *prohairesis* in general. However, I think that it is not the best interpretation. Although Aristotle employs the expression “ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία” only at the beginning of the discussion and in the sequence only the word “προαίρεσις” without being followed by the adjective “σπουδαία”, this is not a good reason for assuming that he is no longer discussing “ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία”. The same kind of phenomenon is seen in the case of the expression “ἠθικὴ ἀρετή”. Aristotle makes reference to it in many passages only with the word “ἀρετή”. Angioni (2008, p. 92 footnote 3) calls our attention to a similar pattern of writing in regard to the word “οὐσία” in the *Met.*

passage, however, that may be construed as claiming that the desires under the responsibility of character follow what reason prescribes. Here is the passage:

T14. ἔστι δ' ὅπερ ἐν διανοίᾳ κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις, τοῦτ' ἐν ὀρέξει δίωξις καὶ φυγή· ὥστ' ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις βουλευτικὴ, δεῖ διὰ ταῦτα μὲν τὸν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν, εἴπερ ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν (*NE* 1139a21-26).

What affirmation and negation are in thinking, pursuit and avoidance are in desire; so that since moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts¹⁰⁹ (Dahl's translation, 1984, p. 38).

About this passage, Dahl (1984, p. 38) says that “Aristotle seems to be saying here that reason does apprehend the ends of action, for he seems to be saying that in order for a choice to be good, desire must pursue what reason has told it to pursue, viz., an appropriate end”. In spite of taking the passage in this way, he recognizes that a Humean interpreter of the labour division could easily dismiss his interpretation by saying that the passage is ambiguous for counting decisively for a non-Humean account of the labour division¹¹⁰. The passage is indeed ambiguous. Dahl even says that it can also be understood as meaning that what character follows are the means dictated by reason (Dahl 1984, p. 38). Although the passage does not settle the matter, it provides us with an important result: a virtuous *prohairesis* (ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία) is made up of *phronesis* and virtue of character. Given this, it seems plausible to draw the conclusion that, when Aristotle claims that virtue of character makes *prohairesis* right, he may be just saying that without virtue of character there is no virtuous *prohairesis*. There is no need to take a step further and be committed to the claim that virtue of character is exclusively responsible for *prohairesis* or for providing the goal involved in it while *phronesis* for finding out the ways to achieve it. *NE* VI.2 is far from confirming this view. Now back to *NE* VI.12.

In the translation I have provided, Aristotle is taken to be saying that the things done for the sake of *prohairesis* do not fall under virtue of character's responsibility, but it belongs to another capacity. This is not, however, the only way of interpreting the passage. Lorenz (2009, p. 203-204) defends that the pronoun “ἐκείνη” in line 1144a21 does not make reference to the word “*prohairesis*”, found in line 1144a21 but to the word “virtue” in the same line. One of Lorenz's arguments (2009, p. 206) to support this view is that, when formulating the puzzles about the

¹⁰⁹ Rowe (2002) provide a less committed translation: “what affirmation and denial are in the case of thought, pursuit and avoidance are with desire; so that, since excellence of character is a disposition issuing in decisions, and decision is a desire informed by deliberation, in consequence both what issues from reason must be true and the desire must be correct for the decision to be a good one, and reason must assert and desire pursue the same things”.

¹¹⁰ Dahl himself recognizes that this passage alone is not enough to support his view. For him, a complete defence of it is possible only after his exegesis of passages like 1112b13 and 1144a6-9.

usefulness of *phronesis*, one problem raised was that *phronesis* may be useful to those who want to become virtuous but not to those who are already virtuous. In his interpretation, the passage intends to show that *phronesis* does not play this role but another capacity, namely cleverness. Although Lorenz's view is philosophically plausible, I prefer to stick to the view that the word “ἐκείνη” in line 1144a21 makes reference to the word “*prohairesis*” one line above and that Aristotle is discussing *phronesis*' responsibility in regard to the things that conduces to the achievement of a good *prohairesis*. Below I display some reasons in favour of this view.

The wider argumentative context of the discussed passage is intended to show why *phronesis* makes individuals more able to perform fine and just actions (*NE* 1144a11-13). The first step taken by Aristotle is to argue that the properly virtuous actions should be performed by being in a certain condition (*NE* 1144a18). As a crucial requirement for the performance of properly virtuous actions, Aristotle retrieves one of the three requirements expounded in *NE* II.4: to act out of *prohairesis* and for the sake of the actions themselves (*NE* 1144a19-20). It is within this wider context that Aristotle says that what is done for the sake of *prohairesis* falls under the responsibility of another capacity. His interest lies in explaining which capacities are involved in the *prohairesis* of virtuous individuals, not which capacities are involved in becoming virtuous. Although I admit that Aristotle ends up giving an answer to the puzzle mentioned by Lorenz (I will show it later), this is not his primary argumentative target. However, even in the case of this interpretative concession, there is no need to foot the bill of Lorenz's interpretation. An additional argument against Lorenz's view is that, when Aristotle employs the word “ἀρετή” in line 1144a20, I do not think he uses the word “virtue” as the same as that through someone can be called a virtuous individual, such as it is employed in the formulation of the puzzles. The word is used in the sense of virtue of character. The argument is concerned with virtue of character's and *phronesis*' role in a virtuous *prohairesis*. It seems to me that Lorenz's interpretation understands the word “ἀρετή” in a general way. For him, what the other capacity does is to make individuals do those things that are conducive to becoming virtuous, not the things that are conducive to virtue of character. In his own words: “Aristotle's concern in our passage is actions that are done for the sake of virtue: in other words, actions people do in order to be or become virtuous” (Lorenz 2009, p. 203-204). But being a virtuous individual is not only a question of having virtue in the precise sense of virtue of character, which is how the word “ἀρετή” must be taken in the passage. A virtuous individual needs to have both virtue of character and *phronesis*, as the arguments in the sequence will make it clear. But the claim that virtue of character makes *prohairesis* right should not be read as saying that virtue of character is responsible for the goal involved in it. For this reason, the passage under discussion cannot count as evidence for Humean interpretations.

3.10. Cleverness, Knavery, and *Phronesis*

Let's proceed with Aristotle's argument. I quote below the passage where Aristotle establishes the distinction between *phronesis*, knavery, and cleverness:

T15. λεκτέον δ' ἐπιστήσασσι σαφέστερον περὶ αὐτῶν. ἔστι δὴ δύναμις ἣν καλοῦσι δεινότητα· αὕτη δ' ἐστὶ τοιαύτη ὥστε τὰ πρὸς τὸν ὑποτεθέντα σκοπὸν συντείνοντα δύνασθαι ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν αὐτοῦ. ἂν μὲν οὖν ὁ σκοπὸς ἦ καλός, ἐπαινετὴ ἐστὶν, ἐὰν δὲ φαῦλος, πανουργία· διὸ καὶ τοὺς φρονίμους δεινοὺς καὶ πανούργους φημὲν εἶναι. ἔστι δ' ἡ φρόνησις οὐχ ἡ δύναμις, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄνευ τῆς δυνάμεως ταύτης (*NE* 1144a22-29).

But we must fix our minds on these and discuss them in a more illuminating way. There is an ability that people call 'cleverness'; and this is of a sort such that, when it comes to the things that conduce to a proposed goal, it is able to carry these out and do so successfully. Now if the aim is a fine one, this ability is to be praised, but if the aim is a bad one, then it is knavery; which is why we say that both the *phronimos* and the knave are clever¹¹¹. *Phronesis* is not identical with this capacity, but it is not without this capacity.

In his initial description of cleverness in lines 1144a24-26, Aristotle does not seem to attach to its success in achieving a certain target any moral evaluation. Cleverness is a capacity that enables the individual to aim and attain any given target. This ability is described as able to find out the ways of getting what the agent sets as a goal for himself. What comes next in the passage is difficult to understand in detail. In general lines, it claims that, if the goal is fine, the capacity to achieve it is praised; if the goal is bad, the capacity is knavery. In the case of the former ability, it is not clear whether Aristotle is already talking about *phronesis* or whether he is claiming that cleverness is praised when it aims at a fine goal. Angioni seems to show preference for the first option¹¹². In the latter, it is not clear whether knavery is a proper capacity of vicious individuals or whether knavery is how cleverness is called when it is employed to pursue bad goals. What makes even harder to settle this matter is the fact that this is the only occurrence of the word “πανουργία” in the whole *NE*. In the *EE*, the word is also found just once (*EE* 1221a12). In this treatise, *phronesis* is presented by Aristotle as a virtue between two vices, πανουργία and εὐήθεια. Πανουργία appears as a vice. In the *NE*, this is not so clear if it is a vice. A possible way out is to assume that Aristotle works in the passage with contrasts and that the introduction of the notion of

¹¹¹ This phrase is rendered in a different way by Ross revised by Lesley: “hence we call even men of practical wisdom clever or smart”. Translations similar to Rowe's are found in Rackham 1926: “this is how we come to speak of both prudent men and knaves as clever”; Irwin 1999: “that is why both prudent and unscrupulous people are called clever”; Crisp 2000: “this is why both practically wise and villainous people are called clever”; Reeve 2014: “that is why both practically-wise people and unscrupulous ones are said to be clever”. A different rendering is adopted by Beresford 2020: “that explains why clever, cunning people are also [sometimes] called ‘wise’”. Although the Greek text is a little bit misleading, it seems to me that Aristotle is trying to show that both knave and *phronesis* are called clever because they all share a common feature: to be able to achieve their goals.

¹¹² “Os fins que a destreza se propõe a realizar podem ser ruins – a destreza torna-se, assim, esperteza ou velhacaria – ou podem ser bons, de modo que a destreza se torna, nesse caso, sensatez” (Angioni 2011, p. 338).

πανουργία is intended to establish a contrast with *phronesis*. In this case, the argument can be construed in the following way. When Aristotle introduces the idea of a fine goal in the passage, he is making reference to the kind of goal that virtuous individuals have in their actions (*NE* 1113a31, 1115b12, and 1120a12, 23). In this case, the example is not about someone who aims at a fine goal by chance or just in a couple of situations but about someone who adopts it consistently as his aim in his actions and acts accordingly, namely the virtuous individual. Contrary to this sort of individual, Aristotle presents on the other hand the knave, who has the opposite kind of character and pursues what is opposite to the fine. Such an interpretation is in line with the view of knavery in the *EE*, which sees it as a vice. Here I am inclined to agree with Lorenz that cleverness is the capacity that may help those who are in their path to virtue. As *phronesis* is available only to those who are already virtuous, cleverness may play the job of making people figure out the ways of acting correctly before they become virtuous and acquire *phronesis*. But, just as cleverness may be a path to *phronesis*, it may also play a role in the path to vice because cleverness is the mere capacity to figure out the means to any given end.

The next step is to understand why Aristotle says that, although *phronesis* is not this capacity, namely cleverness, it cannot be without this capacity. The formulation in Greek is the following: ἔστι δ' ἡ φρόνησις οὐχ ἡ δύναμις, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄνευ τῆς δυνάμεως ταύτης. One possible way of reading the passage is to take the two occurrences of the noun “δύναμις” to be making reference to cleverness in line 1144a24. The problem with this interpretation is that it seems to commit us to the claim that *phronesis* somehow includes cleverness. Besides, it seems to see *phronesis* and knavery as specifications of cleverness, in a relation of *genera* and *species*. The problem with this option is that there will be no concept to make reference to the capacity possessed by those who are already in their way to acquiring virtue of character and *phronesis* and, therefore, are already able to achieve successfully to some extent the goal they intend.

I think it is possible to make sense of the passage without taking both occurrences of “δύναμις” to be making reference to cleverness. In my view, the first occurrence of the word is related to cleverness, but the second may be taken to be making reference to the description “when it comes to the things that conduce to a proposed goal, being able to carry these out and do so successfully” (τὰ πρὸς τὸν ὑποτεθέντα σκοπὸν συντείνοντα δύνασθαι ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν αὐτοῦ). Aristotle wants to stress that *phronesis* needs to be able to calculate the ways of achieving its targets, not that *phronesis* needs to include cleverness or that cleverness keeps a relation of *genera* and *species* with *phronesis*. The description above is a feature that is shared by *phronesis*, knavery, and cleverness. The difference lies in the fact that cleverness is well characterized by this description and is a capacity restricted to it, but *phronesis* and knavery are not. A complete

characterization of *phronesis* demands more than a mere ability to find ways to achieve goals. *Phronesis* also demands virtuous goals and, as we will see, it is not possible to have *phronesis* without virtue of character. *Phronesis* demands a certain kind of interplay between reason and character. Knavery, on the other hand, is the capacity opposite to *phronesis*. It involves the pursuit of vicious goals and it is reasonable to suppose that it is found in those individuals that gratify *not* their more authoritative part of the soul, namely reason, but their base desires. In a nutshell, this capacity belongs to vicious individuals.

3.11. Virtue of Character and *Phronesis*: the perverted non-rational desires

The discussion of cleverness prepares the reader for Aristotle's claims about the interplay between virtue of character and *phronesis*. The distinctions drawn were part of an effort to avoid the possibility of taking *phronesis* as a mere finding-means ability. In the sequence of the argument, Aristotle gives more details about what is involved in the possession of *phronesis*:

T16. ἡ δ' ἕξις τῷ ὄμματι τούτῳ γίνεται τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἄνευ ἀρετῆς, ὡς εἴρηται τε καὶ ἔστι δῆλον· οἱ γὰρ συλλογισμοὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ἀρχὴν ἔχοντές εἰσιν, ἐπειδὴ τοιόνδε τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, ὅτιδῆποτε ὄν (ἔστω γὰρ λόγου χάριν τὸ τυχόν)· τοῦτο δ' εἰ μὴ τῷ ἀγαθῷ, οὐ φαίνεται· διαστρέφει γὰρ ἡ μοχθηρία καὶ διαψεύδεται ποιεῖ περὶ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρχάς· ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθόν (NE 1144a29-b1).

This eye of the soul [*phronesis*] does not come to be without virtue [of character], as has been said and as is clear in any case; for the reasoning of the actions have a principle – ‘since the end, i.e. what is best, is such-and-such’ (whatever it may be: for the sake of argument let it be anything one happens to choose), and this does not appear except to the good person, since badness distorts a person and causes him to be deceived about the principles of actions. So it is evident that it is impossible to be *phronimos* without being good¹¹³.

As it stands, Aristotle's statement that *phronesis* does not come about without virtue of character is not clear at first glance, even though he says that it is clear and was already explained. How should we take this dependence between virtue of character and *phronesis*? Given what comes in the sequence, a possible interpretation is to assume that virtue of character provides *phronesis* with the goal to be pursued in actions. Virtue of character sets the principles that work as *phronesis*' starting point for its practical reasoning. When Aristotle says that the reasoning of the actions have a principle and that this does not appear to those who are not good, this would be evidence for claiming that virtue of character is responsible for the moral goals. This is the sort of interpretation preferred by those who adopt a Humean take on the labour division. This sort of interpretation seems to be favoured by the fact that Aristotle makes reference to the idea of goal (τὸ τέλος) in the

¹¹³ Rowe (2002) translates the passage as if Aristotle employed the word “ἀρετή” instead of “ἀγαθός”: “so it evident that it is impossible to be wise without possessing excellence”.

passage¹¹⁴. But is it what Aristotle meant to say? I do not think so. The first thing worth noticing is that the passage employs a language similar to *NE* VI.5. In the interpretation of this passage, I have argued that what was at stake was the fact that, for someone who has his moral goals perverted by pleasure and pain, he will not be able to grasp correctly what must be done and, moreover, he will be completely unable to act based on any correct principle because his non-rational desires are strong. Aristotle argues in a similar way here. It is important to notice, however, that again he has in view only the virtuous and vicious individuals. The contrast between these two moral kinds intends to show how the perverted non-rational desires have an impact on the grasp of the correct moral principles and, consequently, in the actions following from them. As I have shown in the discussion of *NE* VI.5, the uncontrolled and strong non-rational desires of the vicious individual overcome reason. Aristotle makes it clear in *NE* 1119b10. The gist of the passage is not to argue in favour of the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals, but to insist on the idea that it is important to keep the excessive non-rational desires under control so that reason is not prevented from playing the role of grasping the principle of action, that is, that the principle appears to reason, and the individual acts based on it. Another important aspect to be noticed is that, in working along with *phronesis*, virtue of character contributes to the performance of the human *ergon* (*NE* 1144a6-7) and ultimately to the promotion of *eudaimonia*. To have the right non-rational desires, listening to reason, is part of the human good.

As we have seen before, Aristotle says that virtue makes the goal right. I have argued that this does not mean that virtue of character sets the moral goal. This claim is very limited in its range. What Aristotle is in fact saying is that virtue of character makes the non-rational desires under its responsibility be directed towards the correct goals, which is not the same as saying that virtue of character sets the moral goals. The passage just discussed does not lend support to this view either. The passage just shows that the perverted non-rational desires of the vicious individual are a hindrance in the task of having access to the correct principles of action and acting based on it.

¹¹⁴ Stewart (1892b, p. 103) adopts an interpretation along these lines: “but what is the statement? Virtually, that ἀρετή makes the σκοπός of the ὄμμα τῆς ψυχῆς good, and so makes the ὄψις of this ὄμμα an ἐπαινετὴ ἔξις”. Gauthier and Jolif (1959b, p. 552-553) take the passage in a different way. For them, *phronesis* is the capacity that sees the right goal. The role played by virtue of character is of keeping *phronesis* in the right track without turning its attention to the wrong goals: “Il reste bien entendu que l'œil de l'âme, c'est l'habileté, qualité de l'intellect pratique, et c'est cet œil qui voit. Encore faut-il pour cela qu'il regarde dans la bonne direction, et le garder tourné dans la bonne direction, c'est le rôle de la vertu [...] Aristote fait sienne cette explication: le vice détourne l'œil de l'âme de la vraie fin de l'homme pour le tourner vers sa fin à lui, la seule que désormais l'œil de l'âme puisse voir: la seule activité qui reste alors possible à l'intellect, c'est de découvrir les moyens qui mènent à cette fin perverse, l'habileté est devenue fourberie”. Moss advocates that the passage claims that virtue of character sets the moral goals p. 223-224.

3.12. What does virtue of character not see?

In the last section, I have argued that one of the goal passages traditionally brought as evidence for a Humean interpretation of the labour division in *NE* VI.12 need not be necessarily understood as supporting this sort of interpretation. I have proposed an interpretation that is not in collision with the central place Aristotle assigns to reason in a virtuous life.

In *NE* VI.12, Aristotle's focus is on *phronesis*. It is from the standpoint of *phronesis* that he expounds the interdependence between *phronesis* and virtue of character. In the first part of *NE* VI.13, Aristotle changes his focus. He explains the interdependence from the standpoint of virtue of character. Let me quote the beginning of this chapter:

T17. Σκεπτόεν δὴ πάλιν καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς· καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀρετὴ παραπλησίως ἔχει ὡς ἡ φρόνησις πρὸς τὴν δεινότητα – οὐ ταὐτὸ μὲν, ὅμοιον δὲ – οὕτω καὶ ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ πρὸς τὴν κυρίαν. πᾶσι γὰρ δοκεῖ ἕκαστα τῶν ἡθῶν ὑπάρχειν φύσει πως· καὶ γὰρ δίκαιοι καὶ σωφρονικοὶ καὶ ἀνδρεῖοι καὶ τᾶλλα ἔχομεν εὐθὺς ἐκ γενετῆς· ἀλλ' ὅμως ζητοῦμεν ἕτερόν τι τὸ κυρίως ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἄλλον τρόπον ὑπάρχειν. καὶ γὰρ παισὶ καὶ θηρίοις αἱ φυσικαὶ ὑπάρχουσιν ἕξεις, ἀλλ' ἄνευ νοῦ βλαβεραὶ φαίνονται οὕσαι. πλὴν τοσοῦτον ἔοικεν ὀραῖσθαι, ὅτι ὡσπερ σῶματι ἰσχυρῶ ἄνευ ὄψεως κινουμένῳ συμβαίνει σφάλεσθαι ἰσχυρῶς διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ὄψιν, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα· ἐὰν δὲ λάβῃ νοῦν, ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει· ἢ δ' ἕξις ὁμοία οὕσα τότε ἔσται κυρίως ἀρετὴ. ὥστε καθάπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ δοξαστικοῦ δύο ἐστὶν εἶδη, δεινότης καὶ φρόνησις, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἡθικοῦ δύο ἐστὶ, τὸ μὲν ἀρετὴ φυσικὴ τὸ δ' ἡ κυρία, καὶ τούτων ἡ κυρία οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ φρονήσεως (*NE* 1144b1-14).

We must, then, reconsider virtue of character as well, for virtue of character too is in a similar case: as *phronesis* stands to cleverness (not the same thing, but similar), so 'natural' virtue too stands to virtue of character in the primary sense. For everyone thinks each of the various sorts of character-traits belongs to us in some sense by nature – because we are just, temperate in our appetites, courageous, and the rest from the moment we are born; but all the same we look for virtue of character as being something other than this, and for such qualities to belong to us in a different way. For natural virtues belong to children and animals as well; but without intelligence to accompany them they are evidently harmful. Still, this much appears to be a matter of observation, that just as a powerful body when moving without sight to guide it will fall with powerful impact because of its sightlessness, so in this case too; but if a person acquires intelligence, it makes a difference to his actions, and the disposition, which was merely similar to virtue of character, will then be that virtue of character. So, just as in the case of that part of the soul that forms opinions there are two kinds of thing, cleverness and *phronesis*, so with the character-bearing part there are also two, one being natural virtue and the other virtue of character – and, of these, the latter does not come about unless accompanied by *phronesis*.

In this passage, Aristotle introduces his concept of natural virtue. He brings this concept to establish an analogy between the relationship that virtue of character holds in regard to natural virtue and *phronesis* in regard to cleverness. In his analogy, what matters is that the two relationships have a certain similarity. The passage, however, does not make it clear how this similarity should be understood.

I have shown that between cleverness and *phronesis* there are important distinctions. Like cleverness, *phronesis* possesses the ability to calculate the ways of achieving a certain goal. But, unlike cleverness, *phronesis* is the capacity that adopts in its calculations the goal aimed by

virtuous individuals. Moreover, the goal promoted by *phronesis*, that is, the proper activity of the human being, is not achieved without the cooperation of virtue of character. While *phronesis* presupposes an interplay between character and reason, cleverness does not and is restricted to the ability to find means to attain a goal. Even when cleverness performs an action that can be taken to be good (for example, to help a friend in need), it fails to be properly virtuous because it is not performed out of a virtuous disposition. These distinguishing features between *phronesis* and cleverness give us some clues to understand the distinguishing features between virtue of character and natural virtue.

One distinction that can be drawn from the start between virtue of character and natural virtue is that the former is possessed by a person only if this person also has *phronesis* while the latter can be possessed even in the absence of *phronesis*. In the passage, Aristotle says that the natural disposition is assigned even to animals and children. I do not want to go into details about whether it is the same natural disposition that is assigned to animals and children, on the one hand, and to adult human beings, on the other. It seems to me that what Aristotle intends to emphasize by saying it is the fact that this kind of disposition is not dependent on reason. In the comparison between *phronesis* and cleverness, Aristotle shows that they share the ability of calculating the ways of achieving goals, but *phronesis* is much more than just this ability. In the comparison between virtue of character and natural virtue, we need also find what the former shares with the latter and in what it is different.

We already know that character prompts individuals to act in a certain way (*NE* 1102b13-1103a3) and that, in the case of a virtuous character, it makes individuals aim at the right goal (*NE* 1144a7-9). Besides, character does not exist without the presence of *phronesis* (*NE* 1144b16-17). Which features does natural virtue share with virtue of character? One basic feature of virtue of character is that it is constituted by non-rational desiderative propensities that prompt the individual to act in a certain way. As a result, I think it is a reasonable assumption to take natural virtue to be constituted by non-rational desiderative propensities that make individuals act in a way that shares certain features with the way of behaving of someone who has virtue of character. We cannot overlook the fact that Aristotle calls this natural capacity *virtue* in a certain sense. This is a strong indication that actions out of a natural virtue must resemble virtuous actions in a certain way.

One possible interpretation is to understand that natural virtue makes individuals have the correct desiderative propensities towards the correct goal, but this virtue may fail to achieve the

correct goal because it lacks *phronesis*¹¹⁵, the capacity that finds out the adequate ways to achieve the correct goal. While I agree that natural virtue may fail to achieve the correct goal because it is not accompanied by *phronesis*' calculation about the adequate ways of attaining the goal, I think that, in order to characterize natural virtue, it is not appropriate to say that its desiderative propensity is directed towards the correct goals and that its moral failure lies in not being accompanied by *phronesis*' calculations and, therefore, not being able to grasp what should be done in the circumstances. There is an important distinction between virtue of character and natural virtue that we miss when we adopt this kind of approach: natural virtue does not aim at the right goal, as I will show.

The topic of natural virtue first comes up in the discussion of courage in *NE* III.8. In his discussion of courage, Aristotle distinguishes the proper courageous actions from pseudo-courageous actions. According to him, there are five sorts of pseudo-courageous actions. These actions resemble their counterpart, the proper courageous actions. The former, however, lacks the features that characterize the latter. The pseudo-courageous actions can be performed due to ignorance, hope/confidence, professional skill, natural virtue, or civic courage. In commenting on *NE* III.8, Taylor (2006, p. 185) points out that the distinction between pseudo-courageous and proper courageous actions lies in the content of the motivation: “they [pseudo-courageous actions] are ordinarily reckoned to be types of courage because they motivate (up to a point) the same kind of behaviour as true courage, but are different from the latter in respect of their motivational content”. What is interesting in Taylor’s approach is that it is open to the interpretative possibility of taking the actions that are out of a natural virtue as producing actions that resemble virtue of character *in regard to the behaviour performed* but that fall short of being performed by having in view a correct motivation. It is important to stress this feature of actions performed out of a natural virtue because, I think, these actions are harmful not only in the sense of not working in cooperation with *phronesis*, a capacity that ensures the adequate ways of attaining the goals, but also *morally* harmful in the sense of missing the correct goal to be pursued in action, *even when* the behaviour

¹¹⁵ In explaining the expression “ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει” in *NE* 1144b13, Angioni (2011b, p. 339 and 341) makes the following remarks about natural virtue: “a virtude natural é apenas uma aptidão ou, talvez, uma propensão natural a fazer o bem (cf. Irwin, 1999, p. 254), mas sem inteligência e sem sensatez, de modo que ela pode levar a um ‘estatelamento moral’ proporcional à sua força: o agente não atina com a ação correta e não realiza o bem [...] A mera propensão natural à generosidade, por exemplo, poderia levar uma criança a doar todo o salário dos pais a um ladrão. De modo similar, a mesma propensão poderia levar alguém a errar na execução de um propósito correto pela avaliação indevida dos fatores singulares, como no caso em que alguém doasse uma quantia indevida a um pedinte, na ocasião errada, no local errado etc. – se doasse, por exemplo, duzentos reais para um mendigo em um local e um momento em que ele certamente seria roubado e espancado pelos meliantes que o observam. Uma tal ação – que não avaliou corretamente os fatores singulares que estavam à disposição do agente e que deveriam ter sido avaliados – de modo algum contaria para Aristóteles como ação virtuosa propriamente dita, pois falhou fatalmente no cômputo dos fatores singulares requisitados para a realização do bem”.

resembles a virtuous one. It prompts individuals to perform the correct actions but out of a wrong motivation. Let me quote the passage from *NE* III.8 where the concept of natural virtue comes up:

T18. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀνδρεῖοι διὰ τὸ καλὸν πράττουσιν, ὁ δὲ θυμὸς συνεργεῖ αὐτοῖς· τὰ θηρία δὲ διὰ λύπην· διὰ γὰρ τὸ πληγῆναι ἢ διὰ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι, ἐπεὶ εἴαν γε ἐν ὕλῃ [ἢ ἐν ἔλει] ἦ, οὐ προσέρχονται. οὐ δὲ ἐστὶν ἀνδρεία διὰ τὸ ὑπ' ἀλγηδόνοσ καὶ θυμοῦ ἐξελαυνόμενα πρὸς τὸν κίνδυνον ὀρμᾶν, οὐθὲν τῶν δεινῶν προορῶντα, ἐπεὶ οὕτω γε κἂν οἱ ὄνοι ἀνδρεῖοι εἶεν πεινῶντες· τυπτόμενοι γὰρ οὐκ ἀφίστανται τῆς νομῆς· καὶ οἱ μοιχοὶ δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τολμηρὰ πολλὰ δρῶσιν. [οὐ δὲ ἐστὶν ἀνδρεία τὰ δι' ἀλγηδόνοσ ἢ θυμοῦ ἐξελαυνόμενα πρὸς τὸν κίνδυνον.] φυσικωτάτη δ' ἔοικεν ἢ διὰ τὸν θυμὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσλαβοῦσα προαίρεσιν καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ἀνδρεία εἶναι. καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὲ ὀργιζόμενοι μὲν ἀλγοῦσι, τιμωρούμενοι δ' ἡδονταί· οἱ δὲ διὰ ταῦτα μαχόμενοι μάχιμοι μὲν, οὐκ ἀνδρεῖοι δέ· οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὸ καλὸν οὐδ' ὡς ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διὰ πάθος· παραπλήσιον δ' ἔχουσί τι (*NE* 1116b29-1117a4-9).

Well then, courageous people act because of the fine, and spirit cooperates with them; by contrast, the wild animals in question act because they are distressed – after all, it is because they have been hit by a weapon, or because they are frightened (since they do not approach if they have the cover of a wood). That they are driven out by distress and spirit and so impelled towards the danger, without seeing in advance any of the frightening aspects of the situation – that, then, does not make them courageous, since at that rate even donkeys would be brave when they are hungry; after all beating them doesn't stop them from feeding. Adulterers too go through with many daring things because of their appetite. [Those creatures are not brave, then, which are driven on to danger by pain or passion.] But the 'courage' that comes about through spirit does seem to be the most natural form, and to be courage once the factors of *prohairesis* and the that for the sake of which have been added. Human beings too, then, are distressed when angry, and take pleasure in retaliating; but people who fight from these motives are effective in fighting, not courageous, since they do not fight because of the fine, or as the correct reason directs, but because of emotion. But they do have something that resembles courage.

The beginning of this passage makes clear that the proper virtuous actions are performed with a view to the fine. In the sequence, Aristotle shows that there are actions that may appear proper courage but that are not. These actions are not performed because of the fine but because of pain (διὰ λύπην, δι' ἀλγηδόνοσ) or spirit (διὰ θυμοῦ). The case of the adulterer is a good example. An adulterer is able to face dangers not because he aims to act finely by performing courageous actions. He faces dangers because he wants to satisfy his erotic desires, his appetite. What leads him to action is the possibility of gratifying his sexual drive. Although some of his actions can be *externally* the same as the ones performed by virtuous agents, when we become aware of his motivation, it becomes clear that he is not performing a proper courageous action. Aristotle affirms that the pseudo-courageous actions based on anger, the most natural propensity to act courageously, are performed neither because of the fine (διὰ τὸ καλὸν) nor as reason prescribes (ὡς ὁ λόγος). For him, their source of motivation is emotion (διὰ πάθος). From this, it is reasonable to suggest a connection between actions based on anger, the most natural desiderative propensity to act courageously, and natural virtue. Natural virtue is non-rational desiderative propensities to act in ways that resemble virtue but fall short of it because of the lack of reason. Because of this, the notion of natural virtue seems to capture non-rational tendencies like anger. This makes room to

propose that actions based on anger are actions based on natural virtue. Actions out of certain non-rational desiderative propensities share an *external resemblance* to proper virtuous actions but their performance does not have in view the promotion of the fine. To perform proper virtuous actions, the agent possessing natural virtue needs to add to his actions *prohairesis* and the that for the sake of which. These remarks make clear that natural virtue is unable to act for the sake of the right goal. Now let's go back to *NE* VI.13.

To illustrate the fact that the natural virtues are harmful without the presence of reason, Aristotle evokes the image of a powerful body that stumbles because of the lack of sight¹¹⁶. What Aristotle intends to show with this image is not clear. Moss defends that Aristotle's argumentative interest lies in showing that the agent has a correct goal but, due to the lack of *phronesis*, he is unable to see correctly what should be done in the circumstances to achieve this goal¹¹⁷. This interpretation assumes that natural virtue enables its possessor to aim at the correct goal. But, as we have seen, natural virtue does not grant the correctness of the aim. What the natural virtue grants to its possessor is a desiderative propensity to act in ways that at least *externally* resemble virtuous actions. This desiderative propensity is not guided by the aiming of the fine, but because of pain (διὰ λύπην, δι' ἀλγηδόνας), spirit (διὰ θυμοῦ), and/or emotion (διὰ πάθος) (*NE* 1117a2-3, 6, 9). In my view, the image of a powerful body stumbling should not be understood as if the agent saw the correct goal to be pursued but lacked sight in regard to the ways of achieving it¹¹⁸. This lack of sight is not restricted only to the ways of achieving a correct goal, it should also include the correct goal itself. Natural virtue does not ensure that the goal pursued is correct. This is made clear by *NE* III.8. It is only with the presence of intelligence that the correct aim is incorporated in action. The presence of intelligence makes a difference in action (ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει) in regard both to the goal and to the ways of achieving it. The presence of reason makes a difference in the motivation guiding action.

¹¹⁶ Reeve defends that reason gives the goal. However, he defends this view by introducing the concept of *nous*: “*Nous* is of the first principle or unconditional end, *eudaimonia*. So what natural virtue lacks... is grasp of the end, grasp of where it is going” (Reeve 1992, p. 86). In fact, Aristotle introduces unexpectedly the idea of *nous* in the passage without giving any explanation about it. See also Cooper 1986, p. 63.

¹¹⁷ Moss (2012, p. 196): “just as a blind person may have the strength and will to walk somewhere but stumbles over obstacles because she cannot see her way, so someone with natural courage (for instance) may have the right goal in a given situation, but blunder because she cannot discern what the brave thing to do is in that situation – and thus wind up acting rashly rather than bravely. After all, even those who wish to do the right thing may find it very hard in a given situation to work out just what the right thing is – and getting it wrong can be a moral failing”.

¹¹⁸ Moss (2012, p. 168) restricts the role played by *phronesis* to calculate the ways of achieving the correct goals: “we can make the point clearer by way of one of Aristotle's own analogies for the relation between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul: a servant who receives no instructions, or no good instructions, from his master, might nonetheless tend to do the right thing, but will be in a state very different from that of a servant practised in obedience to an excellent master. The former acts on his own impulses; the latter takes the lead from his superior. And it would be reasonable enough, if somewhat odd to our ears, to say that only in the latter case is the servant truly (or ‘strictly’) an excellent one”.

I think this interpretation has the advantage of not going against the view that Aristotle assigned to reason the leading role in actions, a position incompatible with being able only to calculate the ways of achieving the moral goals. In a virtuous soul, reason does not play only the role of calculating means, but it also provides the sight of the correct goal, without which character is unable to direct its desiderative propensities towards the correct goal.

Strict virtue does not come about without *phronesis* because the latter is responsible for providing the former with the correct goal. The target of a virtuous character must be the fine (*NE* 1119b16) and this correct motivation is available only when character is guided by reason. Moreover, we cannot forget the fact that the role of a virtuous and correctly habituated character is to follow reason's prescriptions. These remarks show once more that character does not provide reason with moral goals and that we should reconsider the Humean interpretation of the labour division.

3.13. Which preposition κατά or μετά?: a change in the notion of virtue

In the sequence of the argument, Aristotle discusses whether it is more appropriate to say that virtue is in accordance with (κατά) or accompanied by (μετά) reason:

T19. διόπερ τινές φασι πάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς φρονήσεις εἶναι, καὶ Σωκράτης τῆ μὲν ὀρθῶς ἐζήτει τῆ δ' ἡμάρτανεν· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ φρονήσεις ᾤετο εἶναι πάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς, ἡμάρτανεν, ὅτι δ' οὐκ ἄνευ φρονήσεως, καλῶς ἔλεγεν. σημείον δέ· καὶ γὰρ νῦν πάντες, ὅταν ὀρίζονται τὴν ἀρετὴν, προστιθέασι, τὴν ἕξιν εἰπόντες καὶ πρὸς ἃ ἐστι, τὴν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον· ὀρθὸς δ' ὁ κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν. εἰκόασι δὲ μαντεύεσθαι πῶς ἅπαντες ὅτι ἡ τοιαύτη ἕξις ἀρετὴ ἐστίν, ἢ κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν. δεῖ δὲ μικρὸν μεταβῆναι. ἔστι γὰρ οὐ μόνον ἢ κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἢ μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου ἕξις ἀρετὴ ἐστίν· ὀρθὸς δὲ λόγος περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἢ φρόνησίς ἐστιν. Σωκράτης μὲν οὖν λόγους τὰς ἀρετὰς ᾤετο εἶναι (ἐπιστήμας γὰρ εἶναι πάσας), ἡμεῖς δὲ μετὰ λόγου. δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν εἶναι κυρίως ἄνευ φρονήσεως, οὐδὲ φρόνιμον ἄνευ τῆς ἠθικῆς ἀρετῆς (*NE* 1144b17-32).

This is why some say that all the virtues are kinds of *phronesis* – and why Socrates was in a way on the right track and in a way not: for he was wrong in so far as he thought that all the virtues are kinds of *phronesis*, but in so far as they are always accompanied by *phronesis*, what he said was fine enough. And there is an indication of this for now, in fact, everybody when defining virtue describes the disposition and what it relates to, and then adds 'according to the correct reason'; and the correct one is the one in accordance with *phronesis*. Apparently, then, everyone seems somehow to divine the truth that this sort of disposition is virtue, i.e. the one in accordance with *phronesis*. But one must go a little further on than this: it is not just the disposition according to the correct reason, but the disposition accompanied by the correct reason, that constitutes virtue; and it is *phronesis* that 'correctly prescribes' in contexts of this sort. Socrates, then, thought the virtues were *phronesis* (since he thought they were all kinds of knowledge), whereas we think they are accompanied by *phronesis*. It is clear, then, from what has been said that it is not possible to be good without *phronesis*, nor to be *phronimos* without virtue of character.

One of the difficult aspects of this passage is to pin down the different ways in which the words are employed in the discussion. Aristotle engages in a discussion in which the same

words are employed in different ways. To get started, one crucial aspect of the discussion that should not be overlooked is that the word “virtue” is used in two basic ways. It is understood in a more general way as that which enables individuals to be in a good condition and perform its function well¹¹⁹. Here Aristotle does not make fine-grained distinctions about what is involved in a good performance of a proper activity. The other use of the word “virtue” in the discussion is very specific. The word makes reference to virtue of character¹²⁰. Aristotle plays with these two uses in the passage above.

It seems to me that there is hardly any dispute about the first use of the word “virtue” among those with whom Aristotle discusses. It is highly likely that Aristotle’s opponents would agree with the general way of employing the word “virtue”. The problems arise when Aristotle and his opponents have to elucidate how they flesh out the details of what constitutes virtue. In the first argumentative movement, Aristotle affirms that some, Socrates among them, say that all virtues are *phronesis*. Although Aristotle criticizes this position, he also recognizes that it is partially true, that is, it is on the right track. For him, the human virtue cannot be reduced to *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is just a part of what constitutes human virtue. In the sequence, Aristotle says that those who currently (*νῦν πάντες*)¹²¹ define virtue add that virtue is in accordance with the right reason (*κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*). It is not completely clear what the expression “*κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*” means in this case. The first appearance of this expression is in *NE* II (1103b31-34): “now, that one should act in accordance with the correct prescription is a shared view – let it stand as a basic assumption; there will be a discussion about it later, both about what the correct prescription is, and about how it is related to the other kinds of virtue” (*τὸ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον πράττειν κοινὸν καὶ ὑποκείσθω – ῥηθήσεται δ’ ὕστερον περὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ τί ἐστὶν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος, καὶ πῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετάς*). One possible interpretation is to take the word “*λόγος*” in this passage as “prescription”¹²². When someone acts in accordance with the right prescription, this person acts in accordance with a moral rule. He follows a prescription about how to act. When we say that someone is acting “*κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*”, it also includes the case in which the moral agent takes advice from someone else. In this case, the prescription comes from outside. When Aristotle raised the puzzles about the usefulness of *phronesis* at the beginning of *NE* VI.12, one puzzle was related

¹¹⁹ This kind of use is found, for instance, in *NE* 1106a15-17. But there virtue also applies to non-human things, like horse and eye. In the passage under discussion, virtue is understood as human virtue, that which makes human beings perform well their proper activity, regardless of how the details are understood.

¹²⁰ A couple of examples in which the word “virtue” is used as shorthand for virtue of character: *NE* 1103a24, 1103a31, 1103b7, 1103b14, 1103b27, 1103b34, 1104a19, 1104a33, 1104b9, 1104b13, 1104b24, 1104b27, 1105a9, 1105a11, and 1105a13.

¹²¹ Aristotle shows no concern about explaining who are these people. Gauthier and Jolif (1959b, p. 556) suggest that he has in mind here *les académiciens disciples de Platon*, which are also present in *Met.* 992a33 and 1069a26.

¹²² This is the translation adopted by Gauthier and Jolif (1958), Rowe (2002).

to whether someone could take advice from others in order to act virtuously instead of having himself virtue. I think that part of the discussion about the prepositional change from “κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον” to “μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου” is an attempt to provide an answer to this puzzle.

As we have seen, the requirements for being a good person is to have *phronesis* and virtue of character. *Phronesis* is the capacity responsible for prescribing what must be done in each situation. This is evidence that Aristotle is not akin to the idea of following a prescription given by someone else. When someone does not exercise *phronesis*, this person is not exercising his proper human activity. The virtuous actions must not be done out of an external prescription; the prescription based on which the virtuous individual acts must be the result of the exercise of *phronesis*¹²³. This is pointed out by Aristotle when he says that the correct prescription is the prescription in accordance with *phronesis* (ὀρθὸς [λόγος] δ' ὁ κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν) (NE 1144b23-24). In other words, the correct prescription must be a product of the exercise of *phronesis*.

In the sequence, he says that those who affirm that virtue is a disposition in accordance with *phronesis* seem to divine the truth. The formulation employed is not clear in its details. We do not know whether virtue is taken in the first way I have described above and whether *phronesis* is considered a constituent part of being virtuous. But perhaps for Aristotle's argumentative strategy in the passage these issues are not important and do not affect his main point. It is reasonable to assume that, by bringing this position to the discussion, he wants to emphasize the inappropriateness of describing the virtue as *being in accordance with phronesis* because it can be also understood as following a prescription that is externally given. It is perfectly plausible to argue that someone who acts in accordance with the advice from a *phronimos* is in a sense acting in accordance with *phronesis*. Not his own, but from someone else's. After criticizing this formulation, Aristotle finally provides his own. For him, virtue must be understood as a disposition *accompanied by* correct reason. In this passage, virtue should not be understood in the first way. The general use of virtue is not at play here. Aristotle employs the word “virtue” here in the second way. So we must understand Aristotle's formulation in the sense that virtue *of character* is a disposition accompanied by the correct reason, that is, by *phronesis*.

In Aristotle's view, virtue, taken in the first way, is constituted by virtue of character and *phronesis*. The virtuous individual is someone who has virtue of character and *phronesis*. In the passage under discussion, Aristotle is playing with the two different ways that the word “virtue” can be employed to build his argument. In the sequence of the argument, he says that Socrates considered that all the virtues were pieces of knowledge (λόγοι) because he thought they were

¹²³ In his interpretation, Stewart (1892b, p. 111-112) sees the prepositional change from “κατά” to “μετά” as a change from the idea of an external rule to the idea of an inward principle.

pieces of scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμαι). Aristotle represents Socrates as reducing virtue, taken in the first way, to pieces of knowledge¹²⁴. In opposing Socrates' view, Aristotle puts forward his own in this way: “ἡμεῖς δὲ μετὰ λόγου”. In this phrase, we should supply the word “virtue”. But here Aristotle is no longer making reference to the general idea of virtue but to his use of the word “virtue” as virtue of character. This is made clear in the sequence of the argument. Aristotle states once again the interdependence between virtue of character and *phronesis* and interestingly does so by employing the expression “ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ” instead of using only “ἀρετή”. Aristotle's argument is hard to follow because it is built upon two ways of employing the word “virtue” and he changes between them without any warning.

The formulation of the interdependency claim found in lines 1144b31-32 addresses to some extent the main question that guides the puzzles in *NE* VI.12-13. Let me quote the interdependency claim again: “it is clear, then, from what has been said that it is not possible to be good without *phronesis*, nor to be *phronimos* without virtue of character” (δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν εἶναι κυρίως ἄνευ φρονήσεως, οὐδὲ φρόνιμον ἄνευ τῆς ἠθικῆς ἀρετῆς) (*NE* 1144b30-32). When Aristotle affirms that it is not possible to be good without *phronesis*, he is directly addressing the main puzzle raised at the beginning of *NE* VI.12: what is *phronesis* useful for? Throughout the two last chapters of *NE* VI, Aristotle gives a detailed account about the usefulness of *phronesis* in the virtuous actions and in the exercise of the proper human activity. After proving that *phronesis* is practically useful, he draws the conclusion that it is impossible to be a good individual without having acquired *phronesis* at the same time that he reminds us of the fact that *phronesis* needs virtue of character.

Finally, I am in a position to discuss the last piece of evidence in favour of a Humean interpretation of the labour division in *NE* VI.13. Let me quote the passage:

T20. δῆλον δέ, κὰν εἰ μὴ πρακτικὴ ᾗν, ὅτι ἔδει ἂν αὐτῆς διὰ τὸ τοῦ μορίου ἀρετὴν εἶναι, καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἔσται ἡ προαίρεσις ὀρθὴ ἄνευ φρονήσεως οὐδ' ἄνευ ἀρετῆς· ἡ μὲν γὰρ τὸ τέλος ἦ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος ποιεῖ πράττειν (*NE* 1145a2-6).

And it is clear, even if it did not lead to action, that there would be a need for it because of its being a virtue of its soul-part, and because a *prohairesis* will not be correct in the absence of *phronesis*, or in the absence of virtue of character; for the one causes us to act in relation to the end, the other in relation to what forwards the end.

¹²⁴ Gauthier and Jolif (1959b, p. 558): “L'évocation de Socrate donne tout son sens à la dialectique de ce chapitre. C'est apparemment un Socratique qui objecte à Aristote que la sagesse distincte de la vertu, telle qu'il la conçoit, est inutile, et c'est parce qu'il répond à un Socratique qu'Aristote situe sa réponse sur le plan de l'efficacité: Socrate, en pur intellectualiste, n'a vu dans le problème de la vertu qu'un problème de spécification, et c'est pourquoi il a pu le résoudre en termes de pure connaissance; Aristote, en soulignant qu'il s'agit aussi d'un problème d'efficacité, rend au désir sa place et montre que la connaissance même qui est engagée là n'est pas une pure connaissance, une fonction de l'intellect spéculatif, mais cette connaissance liée au désir, fonction de l'intellect pratique, qu'est la connaissance impérative de la sagesse”.

At first glance, the passage can be seen as a strong piece of evidence in favour of the Humean interpretation. But, given the argumentative context in which the passage takes place, I think there are good reasons to avoid such a kind of interpretation. As we have already seen, the previous goal passages should not be necessarily understood as claiming that virtue of character sets the moral goals. On many occasions, Aristotle clearly assigns to reason the task of guiding character, which is described as being obedient and listening to reason. Moreover, the proper human *ergon* has in the exercise of reason its central feature. All this makes philosophically unsound the central role that is assigned to character in Humean interpretations of the labour division.

To accommodate the passages in which Aristotle says that character must be obedient to reason in a virtuous soul in her quasi-Humean interpretation, Moss restricts this obedience to waiting the prescriptions given by reason about how to achieve what character has chosen as a goal¹²⁵. Her interpretation has to deal with the problem of putting character in the main stage of moral life, I mean, as having the task of setting the goals to be pursued, in an ethical system that sees in the exercise of reason the proper human *ergon* on which an *eudaimon* life should be based. This is not a small issue because it has to do with a central feature of Aristotle's ethics.

The alternative interpretation I have proposed so far to the goal passages is that they do not claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals. These passages should be read in a deflationary way. Their claim is that virtue of character makes character desire the correct goals. It makes character adopt the correct goals as object of its desire. Once the goal passages are understood in this way, there is room for saying that the correct goal desired by a virtuous character is provided by another capacity. As we have seen, even the desiderative propensities, like natural virtue, that make individuals act in ways that seem virtuous are not able to provide the correct goal. For the acquisition of the correct goal, it is necessary the work of reason¹²⁶. I think the passage above should be read in the same kind of way. When Aristotle says that virtue of character causes us to act in regard to the goal, he is claiming that virtue of character prompts us to act in regard to the correct goal. He is saying nothing about virtue of character providing the correct goals. In this moment of the text, Aristotle presupposes that the reader is already aware of the fact that the goal targeted by virtue of character is given by another capacity. The contrast between virtue of character

¹²⁵ Moss (2014, p. 238-239): "But an Aristotelian virtuous person's non-rational part is different. It is well habituated and so wants the fine and the intermediate, but it also knows that this means waiting to hear what reason prescribes. Thus it obeys reason in the much more substantive way that someone obeys another when she says 'I want F things, but I don't know what kinds of things are really F, and so I don't know if I want x or y or z; therefore I will defer to the counsel of my wise parent, friend, or teacher'. Was Aristotle, then, a Humean about practical reasoning? Not precisely. One element of our modified picture still looks very Humean: reason never has the job of setting our ends. That can be done only by our upbringing, for it is our habituated pleasure in doing certain kinds of activities that makes us aim at them".

¹²⁶ The desiderative propensities of the non-rational part of the soul are unable to have the fine as their target because this part of the soul is unable to have cognition of the fine. See footnote 87.

and *phronesis* does not intend to establish a sharp distinction between roles played by each of the two virtues as if virtue of character were exclusively responsible for the goals and *phronesis* for the ways of achieving the goals. Aristotle advances throughout the *NE* a twofold conception of human virtue. The way he formulates his remarks about the labour division are a reminder of this division. The mistake we cannot make is to take the statements about the labour division in *NE* VI.12-13 without putting it in the broader context of the discussion of the interplay between character and reason in a virtuous soul. Aristotle's statements about the labour division in these chapters do not intend to provide a detailed account of the roles played by character and *phronesis* in a virtuous soul. The goal passages are brief remarks emphasizing *certain* aspects of the contribution of virtue of character and *phronesis* to the performance of proper virtuous actions. A full understanding of these remarks demands that we have first elicited their underlying commitments given elsewhere.

3.14. The Goal Passage in *NE* VII.8

Another passage that may be brought as evidence for the Humean interpretation of the labour division is found in *NE* VII.8:

T21. ἡ γὰρ ἀρετὴ καὶ μοχθηρία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἢ μὲν φθείρει ἢ δὲ σώζει, ἐν δὲ ταῖς πράξεσι τὸ οὐκ ἕνεκα ἀρχῆς, ὡσπερ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς αἱ ὑποθέσεις· οὐτε δὲ ἐκεῖ ὁ λόγος διδασκαλικὸς τῶν ἀρχῶν οὐτε ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλ' ἀρετὴ ἢ φυσικὴ ἢ ἐθιστὴ τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀρχήν. σώφρων μὲν οὖν ὁ τοιοῦτος, ἀκόλαστος δ' ὁ ἐναντίος (*NE* 1151a15-20).
For virtue and vice respectively keep healthy, and corrupt, the principle, and in action this is that for the sake of which, just as in mathematical arguments the initial posits are principles. Neither in that case, then, does reasoning teach us the principles, nor does it in the present one; instead, it is virtue, natural or resulting from habit-training, that gives us correct opinion about the principle. Such a person, then, is temperate and his contrary is intemperate.

If I had not yet critically examined other passages on the labour division, the reader would likely draw from this passage the conclusion that virtue of character is responsible for providing the principles of actions, that is, the correct moral goals. At first glance, this passage indeed seems to strongly support a Humean interpretation of the labour division. In commenting on it, Moss affirms that the “non-rational character teaches us the starting-points by yielding correct beliefs” (2012, p. 225)¹²⁷ ¹²⁸. The first thing to be said before going further is that, when Aristotle

¹²⁷ According to Moss (2012, p. 170), the passage gives support to the claim that virtue of character provides us with our moral goals: “what instructs us in right opinion about the goal, according to this passage, is ‘virtue, either natural or habituated’ (1151a18-19). There are two ways to read this qualification: either Aristotle is explaining more fully than he does in the other Goal passages what he means by ‘virtue’ – all virtue is either natural or habituated, and either type can make the goal right – or he is restricting the work of making the goal right to two species of virtue among several. Leaving open for now which he intends, the claim is that the state which makes the goal right is either one acquired by nature or one acquired through habituation”.

¹²⁸ Dahl understands that virtue of character is not completely responsible for the acquisition of the first principle in actions: “If one takes 1151a15-19 to be saying that virtue insures or preserves the correctness of first principles, then

employs the word “virtue”, he is talking about virtue of character. He does not employ here this word in the general sense of human virtue, which encompasses virtue of character and *phronesis*. As a result, when he says that badness corrupts the principle, what Aristotle wants to say is that a bad condition of the non-rational desires, that is, a bad character, has the power to corrupt the moral principle. Here it is important to stress that what is in contrast in the passage quoted, just as in *NE* VI.5 and VI.12, is the vicious and the virtuous characters. The non-rational desires in the vicious character perverts the moral principle¹²⁹, which must be understood in the sense of moral prescriptions about how to act correctly. For a person with a corrupted character, correct prescriptions do not compel him to act because he is perverted by pleasures and pains. As the discussion of *NE* VI.5 makes it clear, the principle of action must not only be grasped by the moral agent but it must be such as to make the agent carry out the action prescribed. So, even that a person who has a corrupted character knows a couple of general correct prescriptions about how to act and behave (for instance, do not drink too much, do not harm other people), they will not constitute principles of action because they do not lead these individuals to action. In a nutshell, they are not principles of action to such a kind of person.

In what comes next, the argument may be construed in the following way: Aristotle is saying that reasoning¹³⁰ teaches us the principles neither in mathematical nor in the moral case. In

it is open to one to say that virtue is not entirely responsible for the first principles of a good person. Not only does this allow room for reason to play a role in the acquisition of ends, it allows it to play just the role I have said that it plays. Virtue either allows one's inductively based judgments about what one ought to pursue to be correct, or it preserves these correct judgments by psychologically integrating them into a person's character, or both. There is even a sense in which the view I have attributed to Aristotle receives a slight bit of support from what Aristotle says in 1151a15-19, for that view explains why Aristotle would express his point by saying that virtue and vice preserve or destroy the first principles. According to this view, correct principles are those which people are ‘really’ aiming at whether they realize it or not. Vice prevents people from seeing what these first principles are. Since these are the ultimate principles that people are aiming at, whether they realize it or not, they are the first principles” (Dahl 1984, p. 83-84).

¹²⁹ I agree with Dahl's interpretative claim that, when Aristotle says that the vice destroys the principle, he is not saying that the vicious individual does not have any principle at all. Aristotle's claim is that the vicious does not have a *correct* principle: “I think it is a mistake to take 1151a15-19 to be saying virtue provides a person with first principles and vice prevents him from having any. Rather, I think Aristotle is saying that virtue preserves and vice destroys the true or correct first principles” (Dahl 1984, p. 83). When we discuss the notion of principle in this passage, we are discussing about the *correct* principle, not about moral principles in general, bad principles are excluded.

¹³⁰ Dahl defends that the word “λόγος” here should be understood in terms of deductive or syllogistic reasoning. But I think that, although this interpretation is plausible, it works based on some assumptions about the principles in mathematics that my interpretation does not deal with: “I think that ‘λόγος’ should not be understood as referring simply to any process of reasoning. Rather, it should be taken to refer to a specific kind of reasoning, deductive or syllogistic reasoning. Aristotle says that the situation is parallel to that in mathematics in which hypotheses (*hypothesesis*) are not taught by *logos*. Although some question exists as to whether *hypothesesis* should be taken to be assumptions of the existence of the primary objects of mathematics or to be axioms or postulates from which mathematic demonstrations proceed, it is clear, I think, that either way *hypothesesis* can be acquired through the exercise of reason. Indeed they would be acquired by *nous*. What Aristotle is saying is that they are not learned by demonstration or syllogistic proof, for all such demonstrations presuppose them. The parallel claim for first practical principles is that they are not acquired by anything like syllogistic reasoning, but are acquired by *nous* or something like *nous*” (1984, p. 84).

this case, it is possible to broadly take the word “ἐνταῦθα” as something like the moral sphere. If this reading is assumed, Aristotle is seen as advancing the stronger claim that in the moral sphere reasoning cannot teach us the principles¹³¹. I think, however, the word “ἐνταῦθα” should be understood in a restrictive way in the passage.

The passage quoted starts out by talking about the relation between two different qualities of character, vice and virtue, and the right principle of action. In the case of a virtuous character, it preserves the right principle; in the case of a vicious character, it destroys the right principle. In my view, when Aristotle employs the word “ἐνταῦθα” in the sequence, he is retrieving the discussion that comes before the passage quoted, where what is under discussion is whether it is easier to change the behaviour of the akratic or of the intemperate individual (*NE* 1151a11-14). If my view is correct, the word “ἐνταῦθα” should be understood as saying *here*, that is, *in the case of a corrupted character*, we cannot make it become virtuous and contribute to the formation of a right principle of action only by means of reasoning and persuasion. What will make this sort of character acquire virtuous traits is initially a re-education of character, as the remainder of the passage will make it clear. The last chapter of the *NE* offers some help in this discussion. In *NE* X.9, 1179b4-31, Aristotle insists on the claim that character is hardly changed through arguments. He claims that arguments have some impact only on those characters that are already akin to virtue. If we intend to make character work virtuously and give its contribution to the virtuous principle of action, argument is not an efficient way. Arguments have force only on those characters that already have their desiderative propensities towards the right objects. To be in such a condition, the character needs to have been correctly habituated or it needs to have certain good innate desiderative propensities, something which Aristotle calls natural virtue. For these reasons, I think, Aristotle’s claim in the passage quoted is that in the case of a corrupted character persuasion and arguments are not effective in changing it. He is not making the stronger claim that in the moral sphere reason does not teach the principles at all.

Aristotle says that virtue of character, habituated or natural, is a teacher (διδασκαλικός) of the right opinion (τοῦ ὀρθοδοξεῖν) about the principle. I do not think this is evidence for the interpretative claim that virtue of character is completely responsible for providing us with the right opinion about moral goals. The first thing to be remembered is that, when Aristotle discusses the practical truth in *NE* VI.2, he makes clear that the practical truth is the result of an interplay between character and reason (*NE* 1139a22-26). From this, I think it is plausible to suppose that what character does is to contribute with its part to the right opinion in the practical sphere. It is in

¹³¹ To avoid misunderstandings, it is important to highlight that the principles that are under discussion are the principles prescribing actions, not the principles of a theoretical science about the moral phenomena.

this sense that virtue, habituated or natural, is a teacher of the right opinion. It is unlikely that Aristotle had given exclusively to virtue, habituated or natural, the role of teaching the right opinion. It is incompatible with the nature of the practical truth and with the pieces of evidence I have displayed against Humean interpretations of the labour division. It is a better alternative to assume that it gives a partial contribution to the right opinion about the principles to form the kind of right opinion found in virtuous individuals, an opinion to which character and reason give their share of contribution. Character contributes to the practical truth by desiring what is proposed by reason to be pursued. As I have shown, a corrupted character can overcome reason and makes the individuals act according to its wants.

The outlined interpretation is preferable not only because it avoids a Humean interpretation of the labour division but it also fits in the wider context of *NE* VII.8. This chapter is interested in whether it is easier to change the behaviour of an akratic or of an intemperate individual. The passage I have discussed so far comes just after Aristotle touching directly upon this issue:

T22. ἐπει δ' ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ διὰ τὸ πεπεισθαι διώκειν τὰς καθ' ὑπερβολὴν καὶ παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον σωματικὰς ἡδονάς, ὁ δὲ πέπεισται διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτος εἶναι οἷος διώκειν αὐτάς, ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν εὐμετάπειστος, οὗτος δὲ οὐ (*NE* 1151a11-14).

And since the akratic individual is the sort to pursue bodily pleasures that are excessive and contrary to the correct prescription but not because he is persuaded he should, while the other [intemperate] is so persuaded, because of his being the sort to pursue them, the former is easy to persuade that he should change his behaviour, the latter not.

In this passage, Aristotle is addressing a puzzle raised in *NE* VII.2:

T23. ἔτι ὁ τῷ πεπεισθαι πράττων καὶ διώκων τὰ ἡδέα καὶ προαιρούμενος βελτίων ἂν δόξειεν τοῦ μὴ διὰ λογισμὸν ἀλλὰ δι' ἀκρασίαν· εὐιατότερος γὰρ διὰ τὸ μεταπεισθῆναι ἂν. ὁ δ' ἀκρατὴς ἔνοχος τῇ παροιμίᾳ ἐν ἣ φαμὲν “ὅταν τὸ ὕδωρ πνίγη, τί δεῖ ἐπιπίνειν;” εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐπέπειστο ἂ πράττει, μεταπεισθεὶς ἂν ἐπαύσατο· νῦν δὲ πεπεισμένος οὐδὲν ἤττον ἄλλα πράττει (*NE* 1146a31-1146b2).

Again, someone who pursued what is pleasant out of persuasion and by *prohairesis* would seem better than one who did it not through calculation but through *akrasia*; after all, he would be easier to cure – one would simply have to persuade him to change his mind. And the saying we use applies to the akratic individual: ‘when water is choking you, what will wash it down?’ For if he had been persuaded of what he is doing, he would have stopped doing it when persuaded differently; as it is, he is already persuaded that he shouldn’t do it, and does it nonetheless.

The puzzle assumes that it is easier to persuade an intemperate than an akratic individual. This claim is defended with the argument that the intemperate acts in the way he acts because he is persuaded to pursue pleasure. As a result, if his mind is changed, he will act in a different way. The akratic is already persuaded to act correctly, but, even so, he insists on acting

otherwise. This means that persuasion is not efficient with him. In his answer to this puzzle in *NE* VII.8, Aristotle is in complete disagreement with this view. For him, the akratic individual can be more easily changed in regard to his behaviours than the intemperate. As the intemperate individual is the sort of person who pursues bodily pleasures because he is completely persuaded that it is the right thing to do, he is harder to go through a moral change. Because of pleasure his reason is corrupted in a way (see, for instance, *NE* 1119b10) that the reason of the akratic individual is not. As I will show, Aristotle claims that the intemperate individual's change of character should not start by trying to persuade him to act otherwise but through a re-education of character by habits. In his case, the starting point of his path to the right principle of action is not by argument.

The goal passage I have quoted at the beginning of this section is inside this wider context. This goal passage is part of Aristotle's efforts to reply to the puzzle raised at *NE* VII.2. I think that what he is trying to emphasize with the claim that virtue, habituated or innate, teaches the principle is that in the case of intemperate individuals persuasion is ineffective to change their character and make him acquire a virtuous principle of action. The path to the acquisition of a virtuous character demands either natural virtue, that is, an innate character akin to virtue, or a habituated character. Before the intemperate individual may be persuaded to change his way of living, his character should be well habituated and trained towards the right objects of desire. Aristotle is emphasizing that the acquisition of a virtuous principle of action by vicious individuals demands not persuasion but training of character. In a corrupted character, reasoning is not effective to instil a change of behaviour. This is why Aristotle says that reasoning does not teach the principles *in this case* (ἐνταῦθα). This sort of person should first go through a re-education of character so that he becomes able to acquire a virtuous principle of action. The context of the passage shows that the goal passage in *NE* VII.8 has a less ambitious target than it is usually argued.

Let me now examine the sequence of the argument in *NE* VII.8:

T24. ἔστι δέ τις διὰ πάθος ἐκστατικὸς παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, ὃν ὥστε μὲν μὴ πράττειν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον κρατεῖ τὸ πάθος, ὥστε δ' εἶναι τοιοῦτον οἷον πεπεισθαι διώκειν ἀνέδην δεῖν τὰς τοιαύτας ἡδονὰς οὐ κρατεῖ· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀκρατής, βελτίων <ὄν> τοῦ ἀκολάστου, οὐδὲ φαῦλος ἀπλῶς· σφύζεται γὰρ τὸ βέλτιστον, ἢ ἀρχή (*NE* 1151a20-26).

But there is a type that is inclined to depart from reason, contrary to the correct reason, because of his affective condition, who is overcome by that condition to the extent of failing to act in accordance with the correct reason, but not to the extent of being the sort of person to be persuaded that one should straightforwardly pursue such pleasures: this is the akratic individual, one who is better than the intemperate, and not bad without qualification, since the best in him is preserved, the principle.

In this passage, Aristotle contrasts the intemperate with the akratic individual. The former not only acts in accordance with his affective condition and contrary to the right reason but

he is also persuaded that this is the right thing to be done; the latter falls prey of his affective condition but he does not believe that this is the right way of acting. Aristotle praises this latter kind of individual because in his case *the principle is preserved*. This remark made by Aristotle strikes us in a first moment because it is clear that the akratic individual does not act based on what his reason prescribes as the right thing to be done. His actions are based on his non-rational desires. But what does Aristotle want to say when he affirms that, in the case of the akratic individual, the principle is preserved? My suggestion is that Aristotle says that the principle is preserved because the akratic individual shares relevant features with the virtuous person. These features are important to the contrast drawn between the akratic and the intemperate individual.

Unlike the intemperate, the akratic individual is not persuaded that pursuing pleasures is the right thing to be done. This means that his reason is not convinced that pleasure is something worth pursuing by itself. This implies that reason's moral judgment is preserved. As I have argued, in a virtuous soul reason is a central element. As reason is preserved, this means that the central element of a virtuous life is preserved. Additionally, it is important to remember that, in *NE* I.13, Aristotle praises both akratic's and enkratic's reason: "but another kind of soul also seems to be non-rational, although participating in a way in reason. Take the akratic and enkratic individuals: we praise their reason, and the aspect of their soul that possesses reason; it gives the right encouragement, in the direction of what is best" (τοῦ γὰρ ἐγκρατοῦς καὶ ἀκρατοῦς τὸν λόγον καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ λόγον ἔχον ἐπαινοῦμεν· ὀρθῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ) (*NE* 1102b14-16). This passage claims that the reason of the akratic individual encourages him to act in the right way. Although it is outweighed by the non-rational desires, his reason plays a role that is also played by the reason of the virtuous person: it urges the individual to act in the right way. Unlike the virtuous individual, the akratic does not follow reason's prescriptions and his character is not obedient to reason. Despite of these differences, Aristotle thinks the principle is still preserved in a relevant sense. In spite of being defeated by the non-rational desires, the reason of an akratic individual still encourages him to act in accordance with virtuous prescriptions. The intemperate individual does not have a preserved reason due to his affective condition. In his case, the path to the acquisition of virtue starts by a re-education of his non-rational desires. Persuasion and reasoning will not prevent him from pursuing pleasure (see, for instance, *NE* 1179a33-b31).

In putting the passage in the wider context of the chapter, my interpretation shows that we must not be committed to a Humean interpretation of the goal passage found in *NE* VII.8. Aristotle's interest does not lie in discussing the acquisition of the right principle of action by any person. He is actually concerned with the issue whether it is easier to change the behaviour of akratic or intemperate individuals and the role that arguments and reason play in this change.

3.15. *Phronesis* and the Deliberative Correctness

At the end of the discussion about good deliberation (εὐβουλία) in *NE* VI.9, there is a passage full of controversies about how it must be understood in the context of the discussion of the labour division. Here is the passage:

T25. εἰ δὴ τῶν φρονίμων τὸ εὖ βεβουλευῆσθαι, ἢ εὐβουλία εἴη ἂν ὀρθότης ἢ κατὰ τὸ συμφέρον πρὸς τὸ τέλος, οὗ ἢ φρόνησις ἀληθῆς ὑπόληψις ἐστίν (*NE* 1142b31-33).
If it is characteristic of *phronimoi* to have deliberated well, then good deliberation will be the sort of correctness that is in accord with what is advantageous in furthering the end about which *phronesis* is true supposition (Reeve's translation).

The controversy lies in identifying which word or expression is the antecedent of the Greek pronoun “οὗ”. The least promising proposal is to defend that the antecedent is “τὸ συμφέρον” (see Greenwood 1909, p. 66). To simply say that something is advantageous is an unclear statement. If something is advantageous, it must be advantageous in regard to someone or to something. The sequence of the passage gives us a complement to “τὸ συμφέρον”. With the complement, we have a more promising antecedent to the pronoun “οὗ”. We get the expression “τὸ συμφέρον πρὸς τὸ τέλος”. A possible interpretation is to take the antecedent of the pronoun to be this whole expression (Walter 1874, p. 470-472; Aubenque 1965, p. 46; Angioni 2009a, p. 193-194). In this case, Aristotle's claim is that *phronesis* has a true grasp of what is advantageous in furthering the end.

The two aforementioned kinds of interpretation favour the claim that *phronesis* does not have a grasp of the moral goal and end up also favouring the view that this would be a task of virtue of character. A last possibility of interpretation is to take the antecedent of the pronoun “οὗ” to be “τὸ τέλος”. In this interpretation, Aristotle is taken to be saying that *phronesis* has a true grasp of the moral goal. In an attempt to see this passage as evidence against Humean interpretations of the labour division, someone may argue that the passage is saying that *phronesis* sets the moral goal. This sort of interpretation counts in favour of my view, for it assigns to reason the power of providing the correct goals. In spite of it, I do not think this interpretation is the most suitable. Even when we assume that the pronoun “οὗ” has as its antecedent “τὸ τέλος”, there is no need to understand that it amounts to the claim that *phronesis* sets the moral goal. This philological alternative may also be understood as claiming that *phronesis* grasps the goal that is provided by another capacity. This interpretation is defended by Moss, for instance (2014, p. 234; see also 2011,

p. 230-232; 2012, p. 180-182.)¹³²: “the content of one’s ends – the nature of the things one values – is dictated entirely by one’s non-rational upbringing and character. It is intellect that grasps ends, and so *phronesis* is ‘true supposition of the end’, but it is character that provides the material for its grasp, and so it is virtue that ‘makes the goal right’”. I think Moss has a good point and, therefore, we should not see evidence in favour of the claim that *phronesis* sets the moral goals in this last philological option.

Given all the pieces of evidence I have displayed to defend that reason has the leading role in action, I have no need to contend that this passage constituted decisive evidence for the claim that reason sets the moral goals. What I need to show is that it does not go against what I have said. The last two ways of taking the antecedent of the pronoun “οὗ” do not offer any challenge to my interpretation. If the antecedent is taken to be “τὸ συμφέρον πρὸς τὸ τέλος”, I can argue that *phronesis* indeed has the job of finding out the ways of achieving the goal. This was made clear in the discussion of *NE* VI.12 about the distinction between *phronesis* and cleverness. However, even adopting this interpretation, I do not need to agree with the further step that this is *the* only role played by *phronesis*. It is perfectly plausible to say that this is only *one more* role played by *phronesis*. If the antecedent is taken to be “τὸ τέλος”, I only need to agree with Moss to the extent that *phronesis* requires a true grasp of the moral goal. However, there is no need to take a step further and say that the content of this grasp is provided by character. As we have seen, the goal passages do not offer decisive evidence to the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals. For this reason, we should not take this claim as underlying our understanding of the passage under discussion. In both scenarios, I can accommodate the passage within my interpretation.

In this chapter, I have defended that reason plays a central role in Aristotle’s ethical system and in moral actions. The proper human activity is based on reason, and character takes part in the human virtue insofar as it has a share in reason, which in this case means to be obedient to reason. This view goes against Humean interpretations of the labour division. These interpretations give character a central role in the decision of the moral goals to be pursued by virtuous individuals. I hope to have shown that this role is incompatible with some tenets of Aristotle’s ethics. Furthermore, the goal passages do not offer decisive evidence in favour of Humean interpretations of the labour division. These passages may be arguably construed without any commitment to this kind of interpretation.

¹³² Reeve (1992, p. 87) and Angioni (2011b, p. 329-331) also take “τὸ τέλος” as the antecedent of the pronoun “οὗ”, but without committing Aristotle to the claim that *phronesis* sets the moral goals.

Chapter 4: Character and Reason

4.1. The Definition of Virtue of Character

Aristotle's definition of virtue of character offers a good opportunity to understand how virtue of character is related to other central concepts of the *NE*. In this definition Aristotle puts together core concepts of his ethical theory and spells out some of their interplay. Let me quote the passage:

T1. ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἐν μεσότητι οὕσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, **ὠρισμένη** λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν (Bekker's critical edition).
 ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἐν μεσότητι οὕσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, **ὠρισμένη** λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν (Susemihl's critical edition).
 ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἐν μεσότητι οὕσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, **ὠρισμένη** λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν (Bywater's critical edition) (*NE* 1106b36-1107a2).
 Virtue (of character), then, is a disposition related to *prohairesis*, consisting in a mean relative to us, determined by reason and in the way in which the *phronimos* would determine it.

Above there is a preliminary translation of the passage where Aristotle defines virtue of character. The words highlighted give rise to philosophical and philological controversies that are important to a better understanding of the elements involved in the performance of moral actions. The passage is also related to different aspects of the interplay between virtue of character and *phronesis*. Let me start the discussion with the word “προαιρετικὴ”.

4.2. Virtue of Character as ἕξις προαιρετικὴ: the alternative reading

In chapter 1, I have shown the arguments displayed by Lorenz to defend that virtue of character is partially rational. One of them consisted in claiming that virtue of character is partially rational because it is defined by Aristotle as an ἕξις προαιρετικὴ. Lorenz takes the expression “ἕξις προαιρετικὴ” to imply that virtue of character is responsible for issuing *prohairesis*¹³³. To carry out this task, virtue of character would have to be rational, for *prohairesis* involves deliberation (*NE* 1113a9-14), a rational activity. Lorenz's claim, however, is based on a controversial interpretation of the word “προαιρετικὴ”. It is unclear whether this word must be construed as implying that virtue of character has the task of issuing *prohairesis*. Part of Lorenz's effort to ground this view is based on a philological argument, of which I retrieve some aspects now. He argues that Greek adjectives with an ending in -ικός or -τικός and which are derived from verbs generally indicate that someone or something is able or suited to do something. As examples, he mentions the definitions of ἕξις ἀποδεικτικὴ (*NE* 1139b31-32), ἕξις ποιητικὴ (*NE* 1140a20-21) and of *phronesis* as a ἕξις πρακτικὴ

¹³³ Lorenz's argument was fully presented in section 1.6.

(*NE* 1140b4-6, 20-21). From a philological perspective, Lorenz's position sounds plausible. But his argument is insufficient to settle the issue. The verbal adjective “προαιρετική” is open to different interpretations and philology is not enough to give a definite answer to what kind of interaction there is between virtue of character and *prohairesis*. In commenting on the word “προαιρετική”, Müller (2019, p. 14-15) shows that there are philological grounds to take this word in the most varying ways:

The general meaning of *prohairesitikos*, suggested by the—*ikos* ending, is something like ‘concerned with decision’. But that allows for a number of different interpretations of *hexis prohairesitikē*: (1) it is a state whose activity or actualization is decision (as *theōria* is the activity of reason that is *theōrētikos*); (2) it is a state that results from decisions (in the same way in which *prohairesis* is said to be a *bouleutikē orexis*, that is, a desire that results from deliberation); (3) it is a state in which that which it is the state of (i.e. the non-rational part of the soul) follows one's *prohaireseis* (in the same way in which doctors who are *dogmatikoi* are said to be such because they follow certain doctrines); (4) it is a state of one's soul which makes one capable or suited for making decisions (in the same way in which *epistēmē* is a *hexis apodeiktikē*, that is, a state that makes one capable of making demonstrations or proofs); (5) it is a state which makes one prone to making decisions (in the same way in which, say, someone who is *hamartētikos* is prone to making errors); or (6) it is state which is ultimately realized in decisions.

The philological evidence shows that there is no way of solving the dispute about the implications of the word “προαιρετική” in the definition of virtue of character by appealing to philology. This sort of evidence gives rise to different possibilities of interpretation. In his interpretation, Lorenz adopts the meaning (4). For him, Aristotle employs the word “προαιρετική” to claim that virtue of character is a disposition that enables its possessor to issue *prohaireseis*. This kind of interpretation, however, clashes with Aristotle's view that virtue of character is non-rational and, therefore, it cannot issue *prohaireseis*. His interpretation, therefore, is at odds with the characterization of virtue of character in *NE* I.13. As I have defended, virtue of character follows reason in actions but does not possess reason in itself. This means that virtue of character is not capable of reasoning or of any activity that involves the use of articulated language and concepts. In a nutshell, it does not have λόγος in itself.

The option that seems to be the most suitable to interpret the word “προαιρετική” is option (3). The main argument to defend this view is that on many occasions Aristotle emphasizes that virtue of character must follow reason. Many pieces of evidence supporting this view were displayed in the previous chapter. Additionally, I have argued in the first chapter that the non-rational desiderative part of the soul, responsible for character, has a share in reason only *insofar as* it follows reason. When this part of the soul does not listen to reason, it cannot be said rational. From this, it can be argued that following the *prohairesis* issued by reason must be a distinctive

feature of a virtuous character. This is why a virtuous character is defined in terms of a “ἔξις προαιρετική”. This expression establishes a link between virtue of character and the *prohairesis* issued by reason. The adoption of option (3) avoids the philosophical burden of assigning to character the task of issuing *prohairesis*, a kind of claim that unavoidably leads us to defend that virtue of character involves the power of reasoning.

It is also important to discuss the other alternatives to understand the word “προαιρετική”. In regard to option (1), we can say in some sense that virtue of character is a state whose activity or actualization is a *prohairesis*, but we must be careful when we say it. It should not be forgotten that a virtuous *prohairesis* implies the presence of reason and character (*NE* 1139a33-34), but it does not mean that the non-rational part of the soul responsible for character formulates *prohairesis*¹³⁴. It contributes to *prohairesis* by making the non-rational desires be in tune with the content of *prohairesis* and desire it. This kind of contribution avoids the conflicts that are seen in the case of akratic and enkratic individuals. To desire what is decided by reason through *prohairesis* is a requirement for being virtuous. If the non-rational part of the soul responsible for character does not desire what is given by *prohairesis*, the character is not virtuous and is in conflict with reason. We must *not* assume that the non-rational part of the soul responsible for character actualizes *prohairesis* in the sense of formulating it. This is a task carried out by reason. In regard to point (2), it is implausible to claim that virtue of character is a disposition that results from *prohairesis*. Aristotle is clear in his claim that virtue of character results from habituation (*NE* 1103a17-18). It is the training of the non-rational desiderative part of the soul that constitutes a virtuous character. It is the habit of following reason and doing virtuous actions that consolidate a virtuous character. Moreover, in a character virtuously consolidated, character *follows* what is prescribed by *prohairesis*; it is *not* determined by *prohairesis*, that is, it does result from *prohairesis*. In regard to point (5), what can be said is that even akratic individuals formulate *prohairesis* (*NE* 1146b22-24, 1148a9-10). They differ from the virtuous individual because they do not follow *prohairesis* but their appetite. This means that virtue of character does not make individuals more prone to formulate *prohairesis* and, therefore, the “προαιρετική” should not be read in this way. In regard to point (6), this characterization does not capture appropriately the kind of disposition that virtue of character is. Virtue of character is not ultimately realized in *prohairesis*. The main task in *prohairesis* belongs to reason. Virtue of character’s contribution consists in following *prohairesis*.

¹³⁴ In this chapter, I discuss the concept of *prohairesis*. I defend that *prohairesis* must be understood as general purposes of action adopted by the moral agent to guide his actions. The capacity that gives the content of this general purposes is reason. Character contributes with the desiderative element.

This means that virtue of character is not realized in the formulation of *prohairesis* but in desiring what is proposed by *prohairesis* and in making the individual act accordingly¹³⁵.

The alternative reading, although possible, is not as cogent as it seemed at first glance. From the philological perspective, the verbal adjective “προαιρετική” has more possibilities than Lorenz proposes. In virtue of this, the matter must be *philosophically* settled by considering the philological options. Against Lorenz’s proposal, there are many pieces of evidence in favour of the view that virtue of character is non-rational. Consequently, given its own nature, virtue of character is unable to formulate *prohairesis*. Moreover, it is clear that the interaction that virtue of character holds in regard to reason is of obedience and of listening to it. As *prohairesis* is formulated by reason, it is reasonable to suppose that in a virtuous individual character will follow *prohairesis*, desiring it and acting accordingly, as option (3) proposes. In virtue of this, translations that emphasize an active role of virtue of character in the formulation of *prohairesis* should be avoided¹³⁶.

4.3. Delimiting the Virtuous Actions

The passage T1 also brings other philological problems. According to the codices, the passage should be read with the words “ὀρισμένη” and “ὤς”. Aspasio proposes, however, that the words above must be replaced by “ὀρισμένη” and “ὤ” respectively. These changes have some important implications. Let me explore each of them.

The first difficulty is related to the word “ὀρισμένη”. The issue is whether it must be read in the nominative, as proposed by the codices, or in the dative, as proposed by Aspasio. If the first option is adopted, the word “ὀρισμένη” is read as linked to the word “ἔξις”¹³⁷. The philosophical implication is that in this case the text would be saying that the virtuous disposition, that is, virtue of character, is determined by λόγος¹³⁸. Such an interpretation seems to assume a

¹³⁵ For Angioni (2009, p. 2-3), virtue of character is a disposition that leads to action: “De fato, parece óbvio, à luz de tudo que Aristóteles diz em *EN* II 1-5, que a virtude moral é uma disposição não apenas para escolher bem, mas para escolher bem e agir bem conforme à boa escolha. [...] Nesse sentido, parece que a plena posse da virtude depende da conjunção de dois fatores: fazer as escolhas certas, pelas razões certas (ou seja, escolher o ato virtuoso devido a seu valor moral intrínseco), e *agir* de fato conforme à escolha certa. Não há dúvida de que Aristóteles não consideraria como virtuoso um fulano que, embora sempre escolhesse atos virtuosos, pelas razões adequadas (isto é, por aceitar o valor moral intrínseco desses atos), jamais passasse à ação propriamente dita”.

¹³⁶ Here are some translations that go in this direction: “la vertu est un état habituel qui dirige la décision” (Gauthier and Jolif 1958); “excellence, then, is a disposition issuing in decisions” (Broadie 2002); “a virtude é, portanto, uma disposição de escolher por deliberação” (Zingano 2008); “virtue, then, is a deliberately choosing state” (Reeve 2014).

¹³⁷ Another possible interpretation is to understand that the word “ὀρισμένη” is modifying “ἔξις” but without taking this word in isolation but connected with the expression “ἐν μεσότητι οὕσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς”. In this case, what is determined by λόγος is the ἔξις *insofar as* it consists in a mean relative to us. In certain aspects, this option amounts to some results that we get with the option “ὀρισμένη” in the dative, which I discuss below.

¹³⁸ For the moment, I leave the word “λόγος” untranslated because of the philosophical issues involved in its translation. I discuss these issues in the sequence.

passive role to the virtuous character, emphasizing the idea of character being under reason's control. I have shown, however, that Aristotle's vocabulary to describe the interaction between character and reason in a virtuous soul is the vocabulary of obedience (see, for instance, *NE* I.7 and I.13) and sometimes the vocabulary of harmony (συμφωνέω in *NE* 1119b15) and agreement (ὁμοφωνέω in *NE* 1102b28). Because of it, it is unsound to say that λόγος determines virtuous character. Rather, a virtuous character possesses the active role of following reason's guidance and being in agreement with it.

If the second option is adopted, the word “ὠρισμένη” in the dative becomes linked to the word “μεσότητι”. This option offers a philosophical interpretation more attractive. What is determined by λόγος is not virtue of character but the mean relative to us in actions. In favour of this view, there is a passage from the beginning of book VI:

T2. Ἐπεὶ δὲ τυγχάνομεν πρότερον εἰρηκότες ὅτι δεῖ τὸ μέσον αἰρεῖσθαι, μὴ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν μηδὲ τὴν ἔλλειψιν, τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς λέγει, τοῦτο διέλωμεν. ἐν πάσαις γὰρ ταῖς εἰρημέναις ἔξεσι, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ἔστι τις σκοπὸς πρὸς ὃν ἀποβλέπων ὁ τὸν λόγον ἔχων ἐπιτείνει καὶ ἀνίσιν, καὶ τις ἔστιν ὄρος τῶν μεσοτήτων, ἃς μεταξὺ φαμεν εἶναι τῆς ὑπερβολῆς καὶ τῆς ἐλλείψεως, οὕσας κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον (*NE* 1138b18-25, highlights are mine).

Since we have said earlier that one must choose the mean, not excess, and not deficiency, and that the mean *is as correct reason says*, let us delimit this. For with all the dispositions we have discussed, just as with everything else, there is a target¹³⁹, as it were, that *the person with reason has in view as he tenses and relaxes*, and a kind of mark that determines the mean states, which we declare to be in between excess and deficiency, *being according to the correct reason* (highlights are mine).

According to this passage, the mean which character aims (ἡ ἀρετή, στοχαστική γε οὕσα τοῦ μέσου)¹⁴⁰ (*NE* 1106b15-16 and 1106b28) is prescribed by correct reason. As I have shown in chapter 3, correct reason is *phronesis*. It is correct reason that delimits the mean by avoiding excess and deficiency. By its turn, virtue of character is in accordance with this delimitation of the

¹³⁹ I take the word “σκοπός” in the passage to be making reference to the target of each action, not to *eudaimonia*, the ultimate goal. A similar use of the word “σκοπός” can be found in *NE* 1106b31-33.

¹⁴⁰ For Moss, the task of *phronesis* is to delimit precisely in the circumstances the mean at which virtue of character aims. In her interpretation, character first aims at the mean, which is then delimited by *phronesis* in the circumstances. I will argue there is no need to introduce in the passage the idea that *first* character aims at the mean and *then* the mean is specified by *phronesis* according to the circumstances. The mean aimed by character is exclusively delimited by *phronesis*. Here is Moss' view: “virtue is an intermediate state between extremes of excess and deficiency, in that it aims at the mean in actions and passions (*EN* II.6 1106b27-28, II.9 1109a20-23). That is, virtue ensures that we aim at the mean – or, to use a less technical formulation which Aristotle frequently presents as equivalent, at acting ‘as one should’. But it can be difficult to know just what the mean is: it is one thing to wish to do what is right in a given situation, but quite another to know just what is right – to know “when one should [act, or feel a passion], and about what things, and in relation to whom, and for the sake of what, and how one should” (*EN* II.6 1106b21-22). Hence the need for *phronesis*, whose function, according to this passage, is to provide the *logos* which defines or determines that mean [...] *phronesis* is necessary for virtue because without it one cannot identify the mean at which virtue aims” (Moss 2012, p. 192-193).

mean¹⁴¹ carried out by correct reason. There are some issues about how *phronesis* does the job of delimiting the target through deliberation. I will discuss them below. For the moment, what matters for my view is that this second interpretation does not clash with the interpretation I have defended so far about the labour division. Actually, it agrees with the view that reason has the leading role, for Aristotle characterizes virtue of character as following the mean delimited by *phronesis*.

Aspasio's reading is more in line with Aristotle's claims and can be easily integrated in my interpretation. On the other hand, the codices' reading gives rise to philosophical difficulties that makes it a reading to be avoided. It makes use of a vocabulary of determination of the *hexis*, that is, of character, by *lóγος* that is not found in other places of the *NE*.

Another discussion about the passage is related to how to take the word “*lóγος*”. There are two options¹⁴². The word can be taken in the sense of a moral rule that dictates how the moral agent must act. In this case, the word “prescription” appears as a good translation¹⁴³. Another possibility is to understand “*lóγος*” in the sense of rational capacity. In this case, “*lóγος*” is taken as a capacity of the soul and what Aristotle is saying is that the mean is delimited by reason without giving more details about what virtue of thought is involved in this delimitation. The elucidation of what capacity is involved is done in the remainder of the passage.

Angioni (2009, p. 16), by his turn, provides a third option of interpretation. For him, the word “*lóγος*” is employed in another way. He argues that this word indicates the deliberative reasoning involved in the formulation of *prohairesis*:

Aristóteles afirma que a disposição para bem agir por escolha deliberada, que consiste na virtude moral, é determinada pelo *logos*. Embora nada tenha a opor contra a interpretação que toma “*logos*”, neste contexto, no sentido de faculdade da razão, julgo que “*logos*”, neste caso, pode ser mais bem entendido como o raciocínio deliberativo que dá origem a escolhas. Como vimos, as escolhas podem dar-se em nível ainda geral e vago, e propõem apenas um alvo que deverá ser mais bem determinado pela correta consideração dos fatores singulares relevantes em cada caso. A determinação da escolha, ou da mediedade, por esse *logos* é ainda insuficiente para resultar na ação virtuosa. É preciso que, a esse alvo, formulado pelo *logos* ainda vago e geral, acrescente-se o determinar a mediedade em termos singulares, pelo justo cômputo dos fatores relevantes. Por “determinar” entendo, neste contexto, o procedimento pelo qual se passa de uma escolha (ou propósito) universal e vaga para uma escolha plenamente determinada, que atende a todas as circunstâncias singulares relevantes para uma dada ação singular. E essa tarefa de “determinar” é feita pelo *phronimos* (cf. 1141b 14-22; 1142a 23-24). [...] É esse ponto que Aristóteles ressalta no passo (v)¹⁴⁴ da definição de virtude moral. O passo (iv) apenas estabelece que a virtude moral alcança pela razão certas escolhas gerais, mas o passo (v) acrescenta que essas

¹⁴¹ An extensive and in-depth discussion about the notion of mean in the *NE* is found in Hobuss 2009b. For a discussion about the doctrine of the mean in the *EE*, see Zanuzzi 2017.

¹⁴² For a different construal of the discussion, see Zingano 2008, p. 130-131.

¹⁴³ Here I quote two translations that adopt renderings that favour this interpretation: “[...] this being determined by rational prescription” (Rowe 2002); “dont la norme est la règle morale” (Gauthier and Jolif 1958).

¹⁴⁴ Here is the preliminary definition of virtue of character offered by Angioni (2009, p. 1) in his paper with his own division of the argumentative steps: “a virtude é (i) uma disposição (ii) ligada à escolha, (iii) residindo na mediedade relativa a nós, (iv) determinada pela razão e (v) tal como o prudente a determinaria”.

escolhas devem receber ulterior determinação para que se realize efetivamente uma ação virtuosa, em atenção aos fatores relevantes em cada circunstância singular.

Angioni's suggestion is philosophically interesting. But some attention is needed. As I have defended, what is determined by "λόγος" is the mean, neither the excess nor the deficiency. The determination of the mean involves a deliberative reasoning carried out by *phronesis* to determine how the mean can be reached in actions. However, how to take the determination of the mean is something unclear in steps (iii) and (iv)¹⁴⁵. It can be understood in two different ways. What is not clear from steps (iii) and (iv) of passage T1 is whether the determination of the mean carried out by λόγος is related to the formulation of a general target by taking into account the aim given by *prohairesis*, or whether Aristotle is making reference to the specific determination of the mean in the context of action when all the morally salient features of the circumstances are already given and the moral agent has to decide what to do. Angioni seems prone to accept the first case when interpreting steps (iii) and (iv). However, the second case cannot be completely dismissed. It is possible to argue that Aristotle defines first virtue of character as an ἔξις προαιρετική to show that virtue of character must follow the general target represented by *prohairesis*, which is formulated by prescribing ways of acting that avoid the excess and the deficiency in a general level. If this view is accepted, what Angioni says that is done in the argumentative step (iv) was already established in the step (ii). I think that the steps (iii) and (iv) is a way to affirm that it is not enough to be in agreement with the general target formulated in the *prohairesis*, but it is also important to follow the mean determined in the context of action. When Aristotle says that the mean relative to us is determined by λόγος, he is no longer making reference to the general target given by *prohairesis*, but he is taking a step further and showing the importance of virtue of character also following the particular determinations of the mean in each context. In my view, the step (v) in Angioni's division should be understood as an elucidation of how it must happen and what virtue of thought is involved in the circumstantial determination of the mean.

Although virtue of character is characterized as a mean state (*NE* 1106b24-34), the step (iv) makes clear that the mean in action is not determined by character, but by a rational capacity. This shows again that a rational capacity has the leading role in determining the mean aimed by a virtuous character. The excerpt (v) gives more detail about it.

The first difficulty in regard to the passage (v) is related to what is the best interpretation of the word "καί". This word can be taken to be fulfilling the role of the English expression "that is". In this case, the Greek word would be establishing an equivalence between the last part of the passage and what came previously. However, it does not seem to be the case. I have

¹⁴⁵ I use Angioni's own division of the definition. See previous footnote.

argued that the last part of the passage comes to provide more details about how the delimitation of the mean by a rational capacity must be understood. In this case, the expression “that is” can be used to translate “καί”, but cannot be taken to be establishing an equivalence. It should be understood as introducing an elucidation of what was said before¹⁴⁶. Aristotle wants to spell out how the mean is determined by reason.

Before we advance to Aristotle’s elucidation, we have to deal with one more philological difficulty. In the last part of the statement, the codices present the option “ὥς” while Aspasio suggests “ὥ̃”. The first option is best translated into English with the expressions “like as” and “just as”. This option makes the *phronimos* someone who has to be seen as the standard for decisions. The second option is best translated as “that by which”. Either interpretation depends strongly on what came previously in the passage. The Greek article “ὥ̃” retrieves the word “λόγος”. Taken in this way, the passage is saying that the “λόγος” that determines the mean must be the same as *phronimos*’ one. In this interpretation, the best translation for “λόγος” is “prescription” or “moral rule”. Given this, the passage would be saying that the mean must be delimited by individuals through the “prescription” or “moral rule” through which it would be also determined by the *phronimos*. The notion of rigid moral rules or prescriptions in Aristotle is a matter of controversy. Although Aristotle seems to recognize that certain actions are morally wrong in any context (*NE* 1107a8-15), he clearly adopts a certain particularism in ethics¹⁴⁷. This view can be conspicuously seen in the passages where he insists on the necessity of investigating what must be done according to the circumstances (*NE* 1104a5-10 and 1111a3-6; see also 1094b25-28), as well as in the role played by *phronesis* in grasping the morally salient features of the situation to determine which action must be done (*NE* 1141b14-16, 21-22; see also 1104b22-24, 1119b16-18). For these reasons, it does not seem adequate to take the relative pronoun “ὥ̃” to be making reference to the word “λόγος” with the meaning of “moral rule” or “prescription”. Furthermore, there is another problem with this interpretation. As I have argued when discussing the last chapters of *NE* VI, the way of acting of a virtuous agent cannot be given *externally*. This means that the virtuous agent himself must find what is the virtuous action to be done through the exercise of his rational capacity, that is, through *phronesis*. The second interpretation here makes room for someone acting according to the same “moral rule” or “prescription” that the *phronimos* would but without being the agent himself the giver of the moral rule or prescription, that is, without the moral rule on which the action is

¹⁴⁶ In English, Crisp and Irwin adopt translations that go in this direction. The first renders the “καί” by employing the expression “that is” (2000); the second, the expression “that is to say” (1999). Still in English, Rowe (2002) and Reeve (2014) suggest a simple “and” in their translation. In French, Gauthier and Jolif prefer the expression “c’est-à-dire” (1958) while Zingano (2008) employs the Portuguese expression “isto é” to translate the Greek word.

¹⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion about particularism in the *NE*, see Zingano 1996. Hobuss (2010) offers a philosophical compelling discussion about the notion of *epieikeia* and particularism.

based having being reached by the exercise of the agent's rational capacity. Given all this, Aspasio's suggestion is not a good fit for Aristotle's ethical claims. The codices' readings are philosophically more interesting. When the reading "ὥς" is adopted, what is introduced by the end of the passage is that the delimitation of the mean by reason must be carried out *just as* the *phronimos* does. This interpretation rules out the possibility of the way of acting being given externally¹⁴⁸. The individual must not only follow a moral rule or prescription, but he must also delimit how to act, that is, to determine the mean, in the same way as the *phronimos*. The *phronimos* exercises his virtue of thought by grasping himself what must be done, not by following external advices. The *phronimos*' delimitation of the mean is seen as an ethical paragon to be followed.

My interpretation of the definition of virtue of character shows that the characterization of it as an ἔξις προαιρετική is not enough to assign to it the possession of reasoning or reason. Moreover, the passage in no moment shows any sign that character has the leading role in actions. Rather, the virtuous character follows reason both in the *prohairesis* and in the delimitation of the mean in the particular circumstances. This view is in agreement with my claims about the labour division. There is no evidence in the definition of virtue of character that it provides the goals. If this were one of its main tasks, Aristotle would have likely include it in its definition.

4.4. *Prohairesis*: the purpose that guides action

As I have shown in the last section, virtue of character is defined by Aristotle as an ἔξις προαιρετική. So, to understand better what it means, it is crucial to have a grasp of the concept of *prohairesis*¹⁴⁹.

The concept of *prohairesis* is controversial. Evidence in favour of this statement can be drawn from the fact that there are varying translations of this concept, each of them revealing different interpretations. One possible translation is "purpose"¹⁵⁰. This translation favours the view that *prohairesis* has to do with a general aim or objective adopted by moral agents. For instance,

¹⁴⁸ Gauthier and Jolif prefer the relative pronoun "ὃ". They construe the passage in such a way that "λόγος" is understood as a moral norm reached by the *phronimos*. In my interpretation, I prefer to avoid the idea of norm because of the inconveniences that it brings to Aristotle's claims: "Notre définition précise enfin quel est le *logos* qui est norme du juste milieu: c'est la règle que donnerait le sage, en d'autres termes, c'est le plan impératif qui permettra d'obtenir la fin de l'activité humaine, la contemplation qui est le fruit de la philosophie. Le *καί* qui introduit cetter dernière clause est explicatif, et il faut lire ὃ plutôt que ὥς" (Gauthier and Jolif 1959a, p. 149).

¹⁴⁹ Gauthier and Jolif show in his commentaries on the *NE* that the word "*prohairesis*" was not current in Aristotle's time. It occurs just once in Plato (*Parmenides* 143c). The word became more used in authors after Aristotle. About this they say: "Ces quelques notations suffisent à nous faire pressentir quel va être le rôle d'Aristote dans l'histoire du mot de *proairesis*: d'un terme encore rare et au sens indéci, il va faire un terme technique, exprimant un concept nouveau à l'élaboration duquel nous allons assister" (Gauthier and Jolif 1959a, p. 190). To understand the historical situation of this word is important because it demonstrates the undeniable difficulty to pin down the meaning of "*prohairesis*" in Aristotle's ethical writings.

¹⁵⁰ In Portuguese, Angioni renders the concept with a similar word: "propósito".

someone may have the purpose of being generous or of helping people whenever the opportunity arises. In this case, *prohairesis* is seen as the policy adopted by individuals in their actions. This sort of moral policy guides the individuals in their actions. This policy is general and needs to be specified in each context¹⁵¹.

It is also possible to translate “προαίρεσις” by the word “decision”¹⁵². This option tends to be understood in terms of the delimitation of what must be done in the circumstances. The concept of “προαίρεσις” is no longer in the general level of the moral policy adopted by moral agents, but it is now in the context of which course of action is required here and now when all the morally salient features are available. The two options of translation are in contrast with each other and each of them puts *prohairesis* in different moments of the formulation of the course of action. Another option is to emphasize the association between deliberation and *prohairesis* (NE 1113a2-4) and translate *prohairesis* by the expression “deliberate choice”¹⁵³. This expression makes clear that *prohairesis* is a choice that is the result of deliberation. “Choice” is closer to “purpose” in meaning than to “decision”.

All these attempts of translating “*prohairesis*” are based on different interpretative views. For the moment, the conclusion that can be drawn from the translations is that *prohairesis* is understood as a certain *selection* of the way of acting, but it is not an easy task to figure out in which level this kind of selection takes place. This selection can happen in the level of the intention, being made more specific in each context, or in the level of the particular decision taken in the context of the action, consisting in the particular specification of general intentions. To elucidate these distinctions, let me present an example. For instance, someone can have the intention of being generous by providing financial support to those in need. This is a general goal at which the individual aims in his actions. However, this general goal needs to be specified on each occasion. Before a situation in which a generous action can be carried out, the individual must ask whether the person really needs a financial support. If so, he must decide how much money he will give and for how long time. It is also important to know whether the person benefited will spend the money correctly or whether the money will be spent with a different end in view from the one for which it

¹⁵¹ Angioni (2011b, p. 311-312) adopts an interpretation along these lines: “esses modos de realização do fim funcionam, no contexto de cada ação, como ‘alvo’ a ser ulteriormente determinado pela avaliação dos fatores singulares. Não é despropositada, portanto, a associação entre *prohairesis* e o ‘alvo’ ou ‘fim’ da ação (cf. EN 1144a7-8, 20; EE 1227b12-13 ss.), e isso em nada contradiz a tese de que a *prohairesis* tem por objeto as coisas que realizam os fins. Se tomei a resolução de diminuir meu consumo de cerveja no próximo verão, é claro que esse propósito pode ser considerado (I) ou como meio para realizar o fim de preservar minha saúde e meu bom condicionamento físico, (II) ou como ‘alvo’ (e fim) que deverei almejar em cada decisão singular a ser tomada no próximo verão”.

¹⁵² Irwin (1999) and Rowe (2002) adopt this option.

¹⁵³ This option is adopted, for instance, by Zingano (2008) with the Portuguese expression “escolha deliberada” and Reeve (2014) in English. Crisp proposes “rational choice” (2000), but, given the context and the connexion between *prohairesis* and deliberation, there is no need to add the word “rational” to “choice”.

was donated. The policy of being generous by providing financial support to those in need can be taken as an example of *prohairesis*, that is, a general intention that guides the contextual actions. On the other hand, the delimitation of what is generous in each context is a second way of understanding the notion of *prohairesis*. In this case, *prohairesis* is the contextual decision made by the agent, which he acts on. Before deciding between one of these options, let's take a look at Aristotle's treatment of this concept in *NE* III.2.

After having investigated the notions of voluntary and involuntary, Aristotle turns his attention to the notion of *prohairesis*. The first statement he makes is that *prohairesis* seems to belong more properly to virtue and that it discriminates character better than actions do (*NE* 1111b5-6). As we have seen in the previous section, the notion of *prohairesis* is important in the definition of virtue of character. Moreover, Aristotle wants to emphasize with the claim above that to know the *prohairesis* that guides an action is more important to know someone's character than his actions. In my view, this claim intends to remark that, when one *only* knows what someone *does*, it is impossible to know *why* someone does what he does. I illustrate it with an example. Someone can donate part of his wealth to charities because he thinks that this kind of action will promote the well-being of impoverished citizens or simply because he wants to build a good image before the society so that he can take advantage of it to wield political power and influence. In both cases, the actions will be the same externally, but their grounds are completely different¹⁵⁴. To put it broadly, *prohairesis* has to do with that which *guides* the actions, I mean, the kind of value or goal that the action seeks to realize. This is the reason why it is more revealing of character than actions. However, it is still open to discussion whether it is more like purpose or decision.

In the sequence, Aristotle argues that *prohairesis* is voluntary, but the voluntary has a wider scope than *prohairesis* (*NE* 1111b6-8). Children and animals act voluntarily but they are not able to act out of a *prohairesis* (*NE* 1111b8-9, see also 1111a25-26). They lack reason (*NE* 1111b12). Sudden actions (τὰ ἐξαίφνης) are also excluded from being out of a *prohairesis*, although they are voluntary (*NE* 1111b9-10). Aristotle probably excludes this kind of action because it is based on someone's impulses instead of in thoughtful actions. Sudden actions (τὰ ἐξαίφνης) are voluntary because the source of action is in the agent in these cases.

After these considerations, Aristotle dismisses some candidates that are usually thought to answer the question "what is *prohairesis*?" They are appetite, spirit, wish and certain kind of opinion (*NE* 1111b10-12). *Prohairesis* cannot be identified with appetite or spirit because these two are also found in non-rational creatures while *prohairesis* is not (*NE* 1111b12-13). As further

¹⁵⁴ Zingano provides a compelling discussion about the possibility of taking *prohairesis* here as intention (p. 160-162).

evidence, Aristotle brings as examples the akratic and enkratic individual. The first follows his appetite instead of *prohairesis*; the second, the other way around (NE 1111b13-15). *Prohairesis* appears as opposing the non-rational desires in both cases. This shows that *prohairesis* should not be identified with appetite or spirit. Moreover, appetite is concerned with pleasure and pain while *prohairesis* is not (NE 1111b16-18). The actions out of spirit seem least of all to be out of *prohairesis* (NE 1111b18-19). Acts out of spirit are sudden while *prohairesis* seems to presuppose the exercise of thought to evaluate the circumstances. The next candidate is wish. For Aristotle, even though *prohairesis* is not wish, *prohairesis* is akin (σύνεγγυς) to it. To draw a distinction between these two concepts, Aristotle defends that wish is also about impossible things, like immortality, as well as about things that are done by others, for instance to wish that an actor or athlete wins a competition (NE 1111b19-24). *Prohairesis*, by its turn, is restricted to those things that the individual himself can do and achieve (NE 1111b25-26). This restriction puts *prohairesis* in the sphere of what is achievable by action. *Prohairesis* cannot be identified with any impossible purpose or any decision that is beyond the agent's power. This delimitation makes clear that *prohairesis* cannot be conceived of as a mere wish or an impracticable plan of action. It must be within what is up to the agent. In the sequence, Aristotle makes an important claim about the object of *prohairesis*:

T3. ἡ μὲν βούλησις τοῦ τέλους ἐστὶ μᾶλλον, ἢ δὲ προαίρεσις τῶν πρὸς τὸ τέλος, οἷον ὑγιαίνειν βουλόμεθα, προαιρούμεθα δὲ δι' ὧν ὑγιανοῦμεν, καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖν βουλόμεθα μὲν καὶ φαμέν, προαιρούμεθα δὲ λέγειν οὐχ ἀρμόζει· ὅλως γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ προαίρεσις περὶ τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν εἶναι (NE 1111b26-29).

Further, wish is more for the end, whereas *prohairesis* is about what forwards the end, as e.g. we wish to be healthy, whereas we decide by *prohairesis* about the things through which we shall be healthy, and we wish to be happy, and say that we wish it, whereas it is out of keeping to say “we decide by *prohairesis* to be happy”; for generally *prohairesis* appears to be about things that depends on us.

This passage has given rise to some controversies. It seems to say that *prohairesis* is not related to the end but to the things that forward the end. This claim together with the restriction of deliberation to the things that forward the ends can be read as evidence for the view that Aristotle's ethics adopts a Humean interpretation of the labour division, for reason appears as being restricted to delimit the ways of achieving the goals given by another capacity, that is, by character. Issues regarding this point will be addressed when I discuss deliberation in the next section. For the time being, I would like to focus on other aspects of the passage T3.

The examples brought by Aristotle in the passage T3 are very important to understand what is at play when he discusses the notion of *prohairesis*. Aristotle argues that we wish to be healthy; however, he surprisingly affirms that it is not up to us to decide by *prohairesis* to be

healthy. What does he mean by that? It seems that being healthy is not something about which we decide by *prohairesis*. One way to understand this claim is to consider that being healthy is *not* something that we *directly* decide by *prohairesis*. What individuals decide by *prohairesis* is to do things that are healthy and that conduces to the condition of being healthy. It is perfectly possible to decide by *prohairesis* to eat fresh vegetables and light meats. These are actions that are up to the individuals and are conducive to health. Nobody chooses directly to be healthy, but chooses those things that will lead to health, like the adequate intake of food and water, as well as the practice of regular physical exercises. In a certain sense, then, being healthy is not up to the individuals. No one becomes healthy out of a personal decision. People become healthy or keep their health because they decide to do things that promote health, but being healthy is not something that is a direct object of *prohairesis*. This happens because *prohairesis* already involves the attempt of putting in practical and achievable terms the goal that is object of wish. The same kind of reasoning can be applied to *eudaimonia*. Being *eudaimon* is not a *direct* object of *prohairesis*. What is achievable by the individuals is the performance of actions that promote *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is then the consequence of the performance of these actions. Someone will be regarded as *eudaimon* when he performs virtuous actions over a certain amount of time (*NE* 1098a18-20). Therefore, he cannot become *eudaimon* by a *prohairesis*, but he can perfectly have a *prohairesis* of performing actions that promote *eudaimonia*. This is something *achievable* and *up to* him. This view about *prohairesis* does not exclude rationality from the possibility of providing moral goals. *Prohairesis* involves reason, but to say that *prohairesis* is restricted to what conduces to the goals is not the same as saying that reason is restricted to these things.

In the sequence, Aristotle investigates whether *prohairesis* can be identified with opinion. He displays several reasons why opinion is not a good candidate to answer the question “what is *prohairesis*?” The first contrast between opinion and *prohairesis* is that the former is not only about what is up to us, but also about the eternal and impossible things; the latter is only about what is up to us (*NE* 1111b30-33). Another point to be considered is that, while opinion is divided into false and true, *prohairesis* is divided more into bad and good (*NE* 1111b33-34). Moreover, having *prohairesis* about good or bad things, not the fact of having opinion about them, makes us of a certain moral quality (*NE* 1112a1-3). *Prohairesis* is praised more by the fact of being according to what should be; opinion, on the other hand, by the fact of being true (*NE* 1112a5-7). Besides, we decide by *prohairesis* about the things that we know that are good, but we have opinions about the things that we do not know whether they are good (*NE* 1112a7-8). Those who have the best *prohairesis* are not the same as those who have the best opinions and those who have good opinions can have bad *prohairesis* because of vice (*NE* 1112a8-11). All these considerations make

clear that *prohairesis* is distinct from opinion, but it does not mean that *prohairesis* does not involve any opinion. Aristotle explains it by saying that “if there is opinion preceding the *prohairesis*, or following it, this makes no difference; for we are not considering that point, but rather whether *prohairesis* is the same thing as a certain kind of opinion” (εἰ δὲ προγίνεται δόξα τῆς προαιρέσεως ἢ παρακολουθεῖ, οὐδὲν διαφέρει· οὐ τοῦτο γὰρ σκοποῦμεν, ἀλλ’ εἰ ταῦτόν ἐστι δόξη τινί) (*NE* 1112a11-13). Aristotle’s claim is that *prohairesis* and opinion are not coextensive. Consequently, opinion cannot be considered as a candidate to answer the question “what is *prohairesis*?” However, it is still open the possibility of *prohairesis* involving opinion to some extent.

In the last lines of *NE* III.2, Aristotle offers his last statements about *prohairesis* before starting the investigation into the concept of deliberation:

T4. ἐκούσιον μὲν δὴ φαίνεται, τὸ δ’ ἐκούσιον οὐ πᾶν προαιρετόν. ἀλλ’ ἄρα γε τὸ προβεβουλευμένον; ἢ γὰρ προαίρεσις μετὰ λόγου καὶ διανοίας. ὑποσημαίνειν δ’ ἔοικε καὶ τοῦνομα ὡς ὄν πρό ἐτέρων αἰρετόν (*NE* 1112a14-17).

Well, it [*prohairesis*] is clearly something voluntary, but the voluntary is not all a matter of *prohairesis*. So is it, at any rate, what has been reached by prior deliberation? In favour of this view is that *prohairesis* is accompanied by reasoning and thought – and even the name indicates what we decide by *prohairesis* to do is chosen before other things.

We have seen that appetite, spirit, wish, and opinion are not adequate candidates to be *prohairesis*. Among the candidates, Aristotle suggested that *prohairesis* is akin (σύνεγγυς) to wish. One reason for this is that both are rational and involve in different levels the consideration for ends. Without having an end in view, *prohairesis* cannot start his work of putting in practical terms how to achieve it. Although Aristotle does not identify *prohairesis* with opinion, *prohairesis* seems to imply some opinions to evaluate the situation and turn into achievable terms the target intended¹⁵⁵. After all these considerations, there is the last characterization of *prohairesis* in the passage above. First, Aristotle asks whether *prohairesis* is what was chosen by prior deliberation (τὸ προβεβουλευμένον). Before this verb can be fully understood, it is fundamental to know the possibilities of understanding the prefix “πρό” in the word “*prohairesis*”. There are two ways of taking it. It can indicate the temporal aspect of *prohairesis*. In this case, what is expressed by the prefix is that *prohairesis* must be *previously* reached by means of deliberation. This means that *prohairesis* is something premeditated and thought in advance. This interpretative possibility ends up favouring the translation of “*prohairesis*” by purpose. The temporal aspect is an indicative that *prohairesis* is not done in the moment of the action but is something considered in advance and

¹⁵⁵ For instance, if someone wants to promote health, this person may adopt the *prohairesis* of having a healthy intake of food. However, to make this diet possible, the person needs to have opinions about what foods are healthy, as well as when and how much to eat (see, for instance, *NE* 1141b18-21). Without opinions or knowledge about these things, the person will be unable to promote his goal and the related *prohairesis*.

before the opportunity to act arises. The second possibility of taking the prefix “πρό” is to understand it in the sense of preference¹⁵⁶. Assuming this meaning, the prefix “πρό” indicates the preference that the individual has for one object over others. In this interpretation, what is stressed by the prefix is the fact that *prohairesis* is ultimately the choice of one object over others. The emphasis is on choosing one thing among different alternatives. In this case, neither the idea of purpose nor the idea of decision is especially favoured because both of them share the feature of being a choice between different alternatives.

There is, however, a piece of evidence that supports the temporal aspect of the prefix “πρό”. It is found in *NE* V.10, 1135b10-11. Let me quote it: “**T5**: but of voluntary actions, some we do having decided by *prohairesis* to do them, other not; in the first case we shall have deliberated beforehand, in the second not” (τῶν δὲ ἐκούσιων τὰ μὲν προελόμενοι πράττομεν τὰ δ’ οὐ προελόμενοι, προελόμενοι μὲν ὅσα προβουλευσάμενοι, ἀπροαίρετα δὲ ὅσ’ ἀπροβούλευτα). Here it becomes clear that *prohairesis* demands prior deliberation. The prefix “πρό” appears in the verb “προβουλεύω”, the same which is present in passage T4. Here it emphasizes the idea of prior deliberation, a meaning which favours the temporal interpretation of *prohairesis*.

It is not an easy task to decide between the two available meanings of the prefix “πρό”, temporal and preferential, especially because they are not exclusive and both can be clearly implied by “πρό”¹⁵⁷. As *prohairesis*¹⁵⁸ has to do with moral decisions, its discussion amounts to assume that it is related to choosing between different courses of action. This is an intrinsic feature of moral choices and seems to favour the preferential interpretation. However, I think the prefix is used to *emphasize* the fact that *prohairesis* demands prior deliberation. In favour of this view, there is the fact that sudden actions (τὰ ἐξαίφνης)¹⁵⁹ are not according to *prohairesis* (*NE* 1111b9-10). It can be argued that *prohairesis* demands time to be formulated and, therefore, it must be made in advance, reinforcing the idea of a prior decision. The question that remains is whether this previousness in decision gives support to the idea of purpose or of decision. In the case of the first, the previousness is understood in the context of general purposes, which are delimitations of values and goals adopted as worth being pursued, chosen *in advance* and receiving more precise determinations in situations which demands moral decisions. In the second case, this previousness is understood in

¹⁵⁶ Stewart is prone to accept this view (1890a, p. 250).

¹⁵⁷ Taylor seems prone to accept the two meanings. He remarks: “Aristotle plays on the ambiguity of the preposition to support his account of preferential choice as choice resulting from prior deliberation” (Taylor 2006, p. 155).

¹⁵⁸ For a historical discussion about the political use of the word “*prohairesis*” in the context of Ancient Greece, see Zingano 2008, p. 172-173.

¹⁵⁹ In commenting on this passage, Gauthier and Jolif stress the idea that “*prohairesis*” is used here with the sense of something decided in advance: “le préfixe *pro-* implique, entre autres, l’idée de faire d’avance; *proairésthai*, c’est décider d’avance, *pro-hairésis*, ce sera une décision prise d’avance, préméditée, et agir *kata proairésin*, ce sera agir de propos délibéré; ce qui s’oppose évidemment à agir sous le coup d’une inspiration subite” (Gauthier and Jolif 1959a, p. 190).

terms of the time required by the individual to grasp the morally salient features and decide what must be done in the circumstances. Here the idea of previousness appears as related to the moment that comes right before the action. Although this second case also captures to some extent the idea of previousness, the first seems to play this role better because it gives more emphasis on the idea of planning something beforehand and choosing in advance the policy of how to act.

To understand better the nature of *prohairesis*, one possible strategy is to take into account certain aspects related to the use of this word elsewhere in the *NE*. Besides its technical usage, the word “*prohairesis*” is also employed by Aristotle in contexts in which this use is not at play. These other uses of the word “*prohairesis*” can offer contributing insights to understand the technical usage.

One important occurrence of the word “*prohairesis*” is found in the discussion about the three lives that are candidate to the position of *eudaimonia*:

T6. οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνδραποδώδεις φαίνονται βοσκημάτων βίον προαιρούμενοι, τυγχάνουσι δὲ λόγου διὰ τὸ πολλοὺς τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ὁμοιοπαθεῖν Σαρδαναπάλλῳ (*NE* 1095b19-22, my emphasis).

Now most of the utterly slavish sort of people obviously *decide by prohairesis* in favour of a life that belongs to grazing cattle, and not without reason, given that many of those in high places behave like Sardanapallus (my emphasis).

In *NE* I.5, Aristotle launches a preliminary investigation into the kinds of life candidates to the position of *eudaimonia*. In this moment, there are three options: the life of pleasures, the political and theoretical life. In passage T6, Aristotle talks about those who have a life directed to pleasures. I would like to call attention to the fact that Aristotle adopts here the verb “προαιροῦμαι” to make refer to a decision about what kind of life to lead and what value to promote as the ultimate moral goal. In this case, people decided by *prohairesis* to promote pleasure¹⁶⁰ in their actions. Deciding by *prohairesis* to lead a life of pleasure is a decision that already involves a certain sort of delimitation because it appears in the chapter as a delimitation of what *eudaimonia* is. What is interesting here is the fact that, although the goal of pursuing pleasure offers some guidance to action, it still needs to be delimited and made more precise in the context of action. For instance, to promote the bodily pleasures in regard to beverage, it is necessary to delimit whether the individual will drink beer or wine, the amount that will be drunk, with whom, and in which social event, perhaps the person prefers to drink at home with friends, etc. After these delimitations, the person will adopt a course of action that aims at promoting the pleasures related to beverage. In the passage, the verb “προαιροῦμαι”, cognate to the noun “*prohairesis*”, makes reference to a decision

¹⁶⁰ The kind of pleasure discussed here are the bodily pleasures, which is also available to animals because they have perceptive soul.

about a general goal that is still in need of being made more precise in the circumstances. Note, however, that in the context of passage T6 the pursuit of pleasure is already a delimitation of a more general goal. The pursuit of pleasure comes as a delimitation of what *eudaimonia* is. This use of the word, therefore, provides support to the view that *prohairesis* should be taken to be more like a purpose or a general policy of action instead of a very delimited decision taken in precise circumstances. Now one more passage with a similar usage:

T7. εἰ δὲ τῆς πολιτικῆς ἐστὶν ἡ σκέψις αὕτη, δῆλον ὅτι γίνοιτ' ἂν ἡ ζήτησις κατὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς προαίρεσιν (*NE* 1102a12-13).
If the present inquiry belongs to the sphere of political expertise, the investigation into virtue will be in accordance with our *prohairesis*.

In *NE* I.2, Aristotle says that in a certain sense the investigation led in the *NE* belongs to the sphere of political expertise (*NE* 1094b10-11). After having defined what *eudaimonia* is in *NE* I.7, Aristotle launches an investigation into virtue in the last chapter of book I in order to have a better grasp of the concept of *eudaimonia*. According to Aristotle, the true politicians, more than any other group, dedicate themselves to understand virtue because they want to make citizens better individuals. Therefore, investigating virtue is to some extent under the political sphere. This interests the political sphere because understanding virtue is an important step to know what are the political measures that need to be taken to make citizens good (see *NE* 1103b3-6). In establishing this connexion between the investigation of virtue and the political sphere, Aristotle stresses that he is still following his initial plan, that is, the initial *prohairesis* of the ethical treatise. At the beginning, the investigation came up as a political investigation of certain sort. Now this view is confirmed by the necessity of turning the attention to the concept of virtue, important to the political activity. Again the word “*prohairesis*” is employed to indicate a general purpose that is fleshed out insofar as the investigation advances and the conceptual framework of the *NE* is developed. This shows once again that the word “*prohairesis*” is better taken to be introducing a general goal instead of a specific decision.

Finally, I would like to bring a passage from *NE* X.9:

T8. ἄρ' οὖν εἰ περὶ τε τούτων καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ φιλίας καὶ ἡδονῆς, ἰκανῶς εἴρηται τοῖς τύποις, τέλος ἔχειν οἰητέον τὴν προαίρεσιν; (*NE* 1179a33-35).
Well then, if we have accorded adequate discussion, in outline, both to these subjects and to the virtues, and again to friendship and pleasure, should we suppose our *prohairesis* completely carried out?

NE X.9 is the last chapter of the book. The passage above is the opening of this chapter. After having concluded his investigation, Aristotle makes in *NE* X.9 a transition from the *NE* to the

Pol. At the beginning of this chapter, Aristotle remembers some topics investigated throughout the *NE* and then asks whether his purpose has been already carried out. In the sequence, he argues that the *prohairesis* of his investigation is not only to know about moral phenomena but to become virtuous (*NE* 1179a35-b7). A view already expressed on another occasion (*NE* 1103b26-29). For my purpose, the sequence of the argument is not important. I would like to call attention to the use of the word “*prohairesis*” in the passage. The word gives the idea of a general goal initially set at the beginning of the *NE*. As evidence that the goal was achieved, Aristotle lists certain topics investigated in the *NE*. The investigation into these topics can be seen as the fulfilment of the general purpose of the moral treatise. In philosophical treatises, it is common that authors assume general purposes and then achieve them throughout the topics investigated. Once more the common use of the word “*prohairesis*” seems to give support to take its technical use in the sense of purpose instead of decision. In the common usage, *prohairesis* indicates general goals that are later fleshed out. If the common use of *prohairesis*¹⁶¹ can count as evidence in the discussion of its technical use, then the idea of purpose is the best option to understand this concept instead of decision.

Given all the discussion, the notion of *prohairesis* seems to be conceived of as a certain policy of action that already stipulates the ways of achieving the goals adopted. This policy comes as the result of deliberation, as the passage T4 makes it clear. In this context, the words “purpose” and even “choice” are better options to translate “*prohairesis*” than “decision”. The expression “deliberated choice” is even better because it stresses the fact that *prohairesis* involves a process of deliberation.

To get a better grasp of *prohairesis*, let me turn my attention to the discussion of deliberation now.

4.5. Deliberation: the moral value of delimiting means

The notion of deliberation plays a fundamental role in the discussion of the labour division. This is because Aristotle seems to restrict deliberation to find out the means to the goals, which are chosen by virtue of character. On many occasions, Aristotle claims that *phronesis*, a rational virtue of thought, is responsible for deliberation (*NE* 1140a25-26, 1140a30-31, 1141b8-10, and 1142b31-32). These claims combined lead the reader to think that Aristotle assigns to *phronesis*

¹⁶¹ In the *Met.*, there is a passage where this meaning is very clear: “for sophistic and dialectic turn on the same class of things as philosophy, but this differs from dialectic in the nature of the faculty required and from sophistic in respect of the purpose of the philosophic life. Dialectic is merely critical where philosophy claims to know, and sophistic is what appears to be philosophy but is not” (περὶ μὲν γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸ γένος στρέφεται ἡ σοφιστικὴ καὶ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ, ἀλλὰ διαφέρει τῆς μὲν τῶ τρόπῳ τῆς δυνάμεως, τῆς δὲ τοῦ βίου τῇ προαιρέσει· ἔστι δὲ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ πειραστικὴ περὶ ὧν ἡ φιλοσοφία γνωριστικὴ, ἡ δὲ σοφιστικὴ φαινομένη, οὐσα δ' οὐ” (*Met.* 1004b22-26).

only the role of providing means. Even worse, from this claim it is sometimes derived the stronger one that reason is completely deprived from playing any role in the acquisition of moral goals. Deliberation is, then, seen as a decisive factor in the attempt of understanding the labour division. Does deliberation involve the choice of goals? Or is it related only to choose effective means to achieve goals given by another capacity? But even if deliberation is related only to means, it is still unclear how this idea of means are to be understood. There are different forms of conceiving it. The view I defend below is that deliberation is indeed restricted to means; the means, however, must *not* be conceived of as instrumental means and as distinct from the realization of the end. The task of setting the means demands a moral sensitivity of the agent to evaluate the moral circumstances and to grasp how certain value or goal is realized in the context of action. My interpretative option demonstrates that choosing means is a morally relevant task, which involves a fine-grained evaluation of the goal to be promoted in action.

The investigation into deliberation is found in *NE* III.3. It occupies the whole chapter and comes after the investigation into *prohairesis*. Aristotle begins the discussion about deliberation by trying to rule out those things about which there is no deliberation:

T9. (i) Βουλευόνται δὲ πότερον περὶ πάντων, καὶ πᾶν βουλευτόν ἐστιν, ἢ περὶ ἐνίων οὐκ ἔστι βουλή; λεκτέον δ' ἴσως βουλευτόν οὐχ ὑπὲρ οὗ βουλευσαί' ἂν τις ἡλίθιος ἢ μαινόμενος, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὧν ὁ νοῦν ἔχων. **(ii)** περὶ δὴ τῶν αἰδίων οὐδεὶς βουλεύεται, οἷον περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἢ τῆς διαμέτρου καὶ τῆς πλευρᾶς, ὅτι ἀσύμμετροι. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν ἐν κινήσει, αἰεὶ δὲ κατὰ ταῦτα γινομένων, εἴτ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἴτε καὶ φύσει ἢ διὰ τινα αἰτίαν ἄλλην, οἷον τροπῶν καὶ ἀνατολῶν. οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν ἄλλοτε ἄλλως, οἷον αὐχμῶν καὶ ὄμβρων. οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τύχης, οἷον θησαυροῦ εὐρέσεως. **(iii)** ἀλλ' οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀπάντων, οἷον πῶς ἂν Σκύθαι ἄριστα πολιτεύοιντο οὐδεὶς Λακεδαιμονίων βουλεύεται. οὐ γὰρ γένοιτ' ἂν τούτων οὐθὲν δι' ἡμῶν. βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν καὶ πρακτῶν ταῦτα δὲ καὶ ἔστι λουπά (*NE* 1112a18-31).

(i) Do people deliberate about everything, and is everything an object of deliberation, or are there some things about which there is no deliberation? Presumably one should say 'object of deliberation' with reference not to what an idiot or a madman might deliberate about, but to what a reasonable person would. **(ii)** Well, no one deliberates about eternal things, as for example about the universe or about the fact that the diameter and side of a square are incommensurable. But for that matter neither does anyone deliberate about things which involve change, but which always occur in the same pattern, whether from necessity, or indeed by nature, or through some other cause (e.g. turnings and risings of celestial bodies); nor about things that happen sometimes one way, sometimes another; like droughts and rainstorms; nor about things that happen from chance, like discovering a cache of treasure. **(iii)** But there is no deliberation, either, about all human affairs, as for example no Spartan deliberates about how Scythians might best manage themselves politically – for none of these things will come about through our agency. What we do deliberate about are the things that depend on us and are doable; and these are in fact what is left once we have been through the rest.

The investigation into deliberation begins with this passage. Aristotle's strategy to delimit the object of deliberation is to exclude from it those things which moral agents do not deliberate about. In passage T9(i), Aristotle rules out the possibility of considering as object of

deliberation those things about which mad or insane people would deliberate. He gives no example but it is not unreasonable to suppose that to deliberate about immortality is among the objects of deliberation that an insane or mad person would have. This example appeared in the investigation into *prohairesis* when Aristotle says that there is no *prohairesis* about impossible objects (*NE* 1111b20-22). In the passage above, the object of deliberation is restricted to that about which a reasonable person (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων) would deliberate. This first argumentative step excludes unreasonable or impossible objects from the sphere of deliberation. The second step brings examples of things that are clearly beyond the scope of human decision and, therefore, cannot be objects of deliberation. The eternal objects cannot be otherwise (*Cael.* II.14, 296a33) and, therefore, cannot be changed by human action. In the same way, the mathematical properties are not an object of human decision, as the examples about the diameter and the side of a square makes clear. In the sequence, Aristotle discusses about objects of different categories that also do not fall under the reach of deliberation. The first example is of objects that involve change and occur in the same pattern. The growth of a human being is a change that follows a certain pattern and is not something about which human beings deliberate. People just grow regardless of their decision. To deliberate not to grow is certainly the deliberation of an insane person. For Aristotle, whether the pattern is due to necessity or nature, it does not matter at all. The point remains: these objects are not objects of deliberation. Even some objects that do not follow a pattern are not object of deliberation. The examples quoted are droughts and rainstorms. Although they share with the things about which there is deliberation the possibility of being in a way or another, they are beyond the human capacity to intervene. To close the examples in passage T9(ii), there are the events that happen by chance. As this sort of event is unpredictable, not being a result of decision or of a pattern, it cannot be object of deliberation. The example given by Aristotle is very illustrative. To discover a cache of treasure is not something that is decided by anyone. The person ends up coming across the place where the treasure was buried, but *not* intentionally.

In passage T9(iii), Aristotle turns his attention to human affairs and shows that even among them not every human affair is object of deliberation for everyone. He illustrates his position by arguing that it is not up to Spartans to deliberate about how Scythians should organize themselves politically¹⁶². Behind the example is the argument that Spartans are not in a position to *decide* and *implement* what they think best in the political community of the Scythians. In the sequence, Aristotle makes this point clearer: deliberation is about those things that are dependent on

¹⁶² Zingano remarks that there is a certain irony in this example. According to him, the Scythians were known for being nomadic and the Spartans for being not prone to deliberate even about their own laws (Zingano 2008, p. 177).

individuals and is about things that are *doable* by them. In order to deliberate about something, this should belong to those things that are under the individual's scope of action.

After the delimitations made above, Aristotle says:

T10. αἰτίαι γὰρ δοκοῦσιν εἶναι φύσις καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχη, ἔτι δὲ νοῦς καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου. τῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἕκαστοι βουλευόνται περὶ τῶν δι' αὐτῶν πρακτῶν (NE 1112a31-34).

For the causes of things seem to be nature, and necessity, and chance, and then, in addition to these, intelligence and everything that occurs through human agency; and among human beings, each group deliberates about what is doable through their own agency.

This passage sums up the causes for actions and events. In his initial steps to delimit deliberation, Aristotle discussed these four causes to see to which of them deliberation was related. Deliberation appears as related to things that have as their cause the human agency. Deliberation is only about things that the moral agent can deliberate. More precisely, only about those things that are doable by *who* deliberates. This means that what is an object of deliberation can differ in certain aspects from one person to another, like the example of the Scythians and Spartans makes clear. Another example is to think about Socrates' trial in Ancient Greece. Someone acting as a judge in his trial was able to deliberate about Socrates' destiny, a kind of deliberation unavailable to any Athenian citizen who was not *acting as a judge* in *this* trial.

In the next step, Aristotle introduces the crafts in the discussion of deliberation. On the one hand, there are certain crafts that do not demand deliberation because they are precise (ἀκριβής) and self-contained (αὐτάρκης). The example given is writing (NE 1112a34-b2). There is no discussion about how a word must be written. There is *one* correct form and it is not open to divergence. On the other hand, certain crafts are not that precise. They come about through us but not in the same way on every occasion. Medicine (κατ' ἰατρικὴν) and business (κατὰ χρηματιστικὴν) fall under this group (NE 1112b2-4). Unlike writing, medicine and business demand an evaluation of what to do and different courses of actions are available to be chosen. But, even among crafts, Aristotle recognizes that some of them are more precise than other. For him, navigation is less precise than athletic training (NE 1112b5). This is because navigation involves deliberation about more details than athletic training. Moreover, the variables involved in the former¹⁶³ are more uncertain than in the second and requires more contextual sensitivity. After these considerations, Aristotle says: “deliberation, then, occurs where things happen in a certain way for the most part, but where it is unclear how they will in fact fall out; and where the outcome is indeterminate” (τὸ βουλευέσθαι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, ἀδήλοισι δὲ πῶς ἀποβήσεται, καὶ ἐν οἷς

¹⁶³ Here are variables that can be considered when navigating: level of sea, resistance and weight of the ship, speed of the wind, the number of the crew, tides, weather, etc.

ἀδιόριστον) (*NE* 1112b8-9). Deliberation is possible only in events in which there is the possibility of a different result. The examples from the crafts illustrate this point well. The more uncertain the final result the more room there is for deliberation to take place. Because of this uncertainty, Aristotle says that in great projects (τὰ μεγάλα) we are more careful about our deliberation and take advice from other people (*NE* 1112b10-11).

In the sequence, Aristotle advances one of the most contentious claims regarding the labour division:

ΤΙΙ. βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη. οὔτε γὰρ ἰατρὸς βουλευέται εἰ ὑγιάσει, οὔτε ῥήτωρ εἰ πείσει, οὔτε πολιτικός εἰ εὐνομίαν ποιήσει, οὐδὲ τῶν λοιπῶν οὐδεὶς περὶ τοῦ τέλους· ἀλλὰ θέμενοι τὸ τέλος τὸ πῶς καὶ διὰ τίνων ἔσται σκοποῦσι· καὶ διὰ πλείονων μὲν φαινομένου γίνεσθαι διὰ τίνος ῥᾶστα καὶ κάλλιστα ἐπισκοποῦσι, δι' ἑνὸς δ' ἐπιτελουμένου πῶς διὰ τούτου ἔσται κάκεῖνο διὰ τίνος, ἕως ἂν ἔλθωσιν ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ὃ ἐν τῇ εὐρέσει ἔσχατόν ἐστιν (*NE* 1112b12-20).
But we deliberate, not about ends, but about what forwards those ends. For a doctor does not deliberate about whether he'll make his patients healthy, nor a public speaker about whether he'll persuade his audience, nor a political expert about whether he'll bring about good government – and neither do any of the others deliberate about the end, but rather they take the end for granted and examine how and by what means it will come about; and if it appears as coming about by more than one means, they look to see through which of them it will happen most easily and best, whereas if it is brought to completion by one means only, they look to see how it will come about through this, and through what means that will come about, until they arrive at the first cause, which comes last in the process of discovery.

In this passage, Aristotle puts forward his claim that deliberation is not about ends but about what forwards the ends. This restriction on deliberation also sounds as a restriction on reason's work and seems to favour interpretations that see the goal passages as defending that character sets the moral goals. According to this kind of interpretation, Aristotle does not give space to reason in the choice of moral goals. Because of it, deliberation will be harshly criticized in posteriority. Zingano (2008, p. 185) remarks that deliberation “será o escolho da ética aristotélica na modernidade”. Aristotle's claims about deliberation, however, are not as clear as Humean interpretations suggest. There are different ways of understanding them.

An initial remark to be made is that Aristotle does not use a Greek word equivalent to the word “means” to make reference to the object of deliberation. He employs the expression: “τὰ πρὸς τὰ τέλη” and equivalents. The expression is unclear. One possible translation is “the things towards the ends”. From the onset, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that deliberation has to do with what conduces to the attainment of the goal. Deliberation contributes to the realization of the moral goal chosen by finding out what will lead to the promotion of this goal. However, this basic understanding is insufficient to have a better view about deliberation. Attempts have been made to provide an account of what it means to say that the object of deliberation are the things that

forward the goals. These attempts focus their philosophical efforts on elaborating more on the notions of means and goals.

One of the main difficulties to offer a philosophically and morally interesting account of deliberation is not to reduce deliberation to a mere calculation of the more efficient means to reach goals. If deliberation is conceived of only in this way, *phronimos*' deliberation becomes mere cleverness, I mean, mere ability to grasp efficiently means-end relations, finding out the means needed to achieve the chosen goals (*NE* 1144a23-26). Given this difficulty, one interpretative challenge is to avoid taking deliberation as a mere instrumental calculation¹⁶⁴ of means. In this case, deliberation would give no contribution to the delimitation of moral goals and would end up being an instrument of calculating means to satisfy the goals given by another capacity. In Humean interpretations, the goals are given by character. Humean interpretations combined with this instrumental understanding of deliberation gives us a picture of the labour division in which reason may be seen indeed as a slave of the passions.

One way to avoid Humean interpretations is to relativize the notions of means and goal and show that deliberation is also about goals because what is a mean or a goal is determined by the context. Except for *eudaimonia*, the ultimate goal, there is no goal that cannot become a mean when one thinks of a larger chain of actions. For instance, someone may have the goal of helping charities with financial assistance. In this case, what is needed to promote this goal is to have money and donate it to the charities. Money is employed in this case as a mean to the attainment of the goal of supporting charities. However, this same person might have a further goal in view. For him, offering financial support to charities is just a way to build a good image before his fellow citizens so that he can wield more power and conquer important political positions. As a consequence, financially supporting charities is a goal to be achieved by donating money. However, the goal of financially supporting charities is just a means to the further goal of increasing political power and influence. This example makes clear that what is mean or goal is dependent on the context and what is a goal in a context may easily become a mean in another and also the other way around. In taking this into account, Taylor (2008, p. 207-208) advances his interpretation of deliberation, according to which the context of the action defines what counts as means and as goal. For him, there is a causal chain of means and goals that finishes with the ultimate goal. The only goal that is not object of deliberation is the ultimate goal, all the intermediate goals are subject to deliberation¹⁶⁵. This means that the intermediate goals can be described either as means or as goals depending on the context. To give textual support to his interpretative claim, Taylor appeals to the hierarchy of ends

¹⁶⁴ In modern times, Greenwood is the first interpreter to articulate a distinction in terms of instrumental and constituent means (Greenwood 1909, p. 58-59).

¹⁶⁵ According to Zingano, the first interpretation of this kind was proposed by Aquinas (Zingano 2008, p. 185).

established by Aristotle in *NE* I.1 (2008, p. 207-208), where Aristotle describes how different crafts are organized in a political community, in which each craft is for the sake of another, from the lower to the higher crafts. The advantage of this interpretation is that it gives much space for reason in actions, through deliberation. The only thing over which reason has no power is the ultimate goal. This interpretation, then, weakens the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goals. The problem is that this interpretation still leaves under virtue of character's responsibility the task of setting the final goal if one assumes that reason's job is restricted to deliberation.

Irwin (1975) has an interpretative proposal that assigns a morally relevant role to deliberation by introducing the idea of constituent means. According to him, deliberation also plays the role of identifying the components of *eudaimonia*. In this case, deliberation would be responsible for deciding about the ultimate goals pursued by the moral agent, goals which would constitute *eudaimonia*. In this view, deliberation is not restricted to instrumental means. Irwin gives much room for deliberation to reduce the force of the claim that virtue of character sets the moral goal. In his view, virtue of character's role is then limited to a general desire for *eudaimonia*, which must have his components chosen by deliberation¹⁶⁶. Irwin's interpretation is ingenious and avoids in large measure certain inconveniences of Humean interpretations of the labour division. Deliberation plays a crucial role in establishing the ultimate goals that constitute *eudaimonia*¹⁶⁷ and, therefore, gives the goals to be pursued somehow. In this interpretation, the desire for *eudaimonia* is completely deprived of any content. For this reason, deliberation ends up being also about goals, for the desire for *eudaimonia* has all its contents fulfilled by deliberation. The problem of this interpretation is that it puts virtually every decision about moral actions under the responsibility of deliberation. But deliberation seems to be in charge of only one certain aspect of moral actions.

Another sort of interpretation is to propose that deliberation involves a specification of a general goal or moral value adopted by the moral agent. Proceeding by specification, deliberation determines what qualifies in the circumstances as a practical realization of the moral goal or value

¹⁶⁶ Here is Irwin's formulation of his position: "for the virtuous man wishes for the right components of happiness, which must be found by deliberation and wisdom, an intellectual virtue. The practical intellect is not concerned with means as opposed to ends. Insofar as it is concerned with constituent 'means', it is also concerned with ends and, thereby, forms wishes for particular ends. [...] Suppose that the desire for the final good is nondeliberative; on Aristotle's view, that is not a desire for any identifiable end, until we have found the components of the good by deliberation. If only instrumental means were left open, then we would have fixed some object of desire – we could identify cases in which it had been achieved – and practical reason would be strictly technical and subordinate to that desire, with no motivity of its own. But if we have a desire as vague as the desire for 'the good for man' or 'the final good' or 'happiness', our deliberation cannot be purely technical, finding ways to achieve the clearly identified object of desire. It is reasoning about the end" (Irwin 1975, p. 571-572).

¹⁶⁷ In contrast to Irwin, Moss argues that these ultimate goals are given by character through our upbringing. Therefore, there is no deliberation about them: "Aristotle's claim is that while we can reason about how to live or what to care about, given a set of ultimate values, those ultimate values are fixed and determined by our upbringings – that is, by the affective, evaluative dispositions that our upbringings produce: our characters" (Moss 2012, p. 197).

adopted. For instance, someone may adopt the general goal of being generous. One possible specification of this goal is to offer financial support to charities. Financially supporting charities qualifies as an action of generosity. However, even with this specification, it is possible to go further in the details. It is possible to donate money to charities with some specific goal to be realized in mind. Let's suppose we are talking about charities that help homeless people. The donation may have different specific objectives in view: to buy food for homeless people, to reform an old building that provides shelter to homeless people or to build a new one, to pay bills in delay, to support a program to find relatives of homeless people. There are many possibilities to think about the specification of the virtue of being generous. After the specification is made, a kind of deliberation related to instrumental means-end can start. For instance, whether charities will receive hard cash or an online transfer, whether the donation will be done regularly or just once. An interpretation that goes along this line was proposed by Wiggins¹⁶⁸ and Angioni¹⁶⁹. This sort of interpretation is important because it gives a philosophically interesting way of understanding deliberation. The process of deliberation becomes in part an attempt to delimit in the circumstances how a general goal adopted by the moral agent is attained. Some variables are recognized only in the particular situations and a virtuous individual must be sensitive to grasp the morally salient

¹⁶⁸ Here I quote a passage where Wiggins puts forward his attempt to formulate deliberation in terms of specification: "it is plainly impossible to deliberate about the end if this is to deliberate by asking 'Shall I pursue the end?' If this end is *eudaimonia*, then *qua* animate and men we have to have some generalized desire for it (generalized desire whose particular manifestations are desires for things falling under particular specifications). [...] In the nontechnical case I shall characteristically have an extremely vague description of something I want – a good life, a satisfying profession, and interesting holiday, an amusing evening – and the problem is not to see what will be causally efficacious in bringing this about but to see what really qualifies as an adequate and practically realizable specification of what would satisfy this want. Deliberation is still *zetesis*, a search, but it is not primarily a search for means. It is a search for the best specification. Till the specification is available there is no room for means. When this specification is reached, means-end deliberation can start, but difficulties that turn up in this means-end deliberation may send me back a finite number of times to the problem of a better or more practicable specification of the end. And the whole interest and difficulty of the matter is in the search for adequate specifications, not in the technical means-end sequel or sequels" (Wiggins 1980, p. 226 and 228).

¹⁶⁹ Angioni spells out this view in the following passage: "passemos, então, ao terceiro tipo de relação entre fins (*tele*) e coisas relativas ao fim (*ta pros ta tele*). O terceiro tipo de relação entre fins (*tele*) e coisas relativas ao fim (*ta pros ta tele*) consiste em relação mais difícil de caracterizar do ponto de vista geral. Trata-se de uma relação na qual o fim é inevitavelmente indeterminado, em virtude da própria natureza das circunstâncias relevantes que o envolvem e que condicionam sua realização. É claro que não se trata de uma indeterminação total, mas relativa. O fim, neste caso, é algo suficientemente determinado para ser compreendido pelo agente como um fim, mas é caracterizado por uma descrição geral e vaga. Por exemplo: tome-se como fim o propósito de agir com temperança. Esse propósito é determinado o bastante no sentido de que o agente o compreende como algo distinto do propósito de agir de modo intemperante; mas tal propósito é vago e indeterminado, de modo que o agente que o acolhe fica, em cada circunstância singular relevante, diante da seguinte pergunta: em que consiste agir com temperança, neste caso em que me encontro presentemente? Em complementação, as coisas relativas ao fim, neste caso, consistem em especificações dessa descrição geral, de acordo com circunstâncias singulares. As coisas relativas ao fim são tais que fazem o fim passar da vagueza para a determinação completa, e são tais porque, neste caso, elas consistem em uma realização total do fim. Seria verdadeiro dizer que, neste terceiro tipo de relação, a realização do fim consiste na realização das coisas relativas ao fim (e vice-versa). A realização do fim não pode ser outra coisa senão, estritamente, a realização de certa coisa 'relativa ao fim', sem exigir etapas complementares. Assim, as coisas relativas ao fim, neste caso, são suficientes para realizar, por sua própria realização, o fim. Ou melhor: a realização delas, em dada circunstância, consiste na própria realização do fim" (Angioni 2009, p. 190-191).

features of the situation to determine with precision what must be done. Although this interpretation makes deliberation philosophically interesting, it still does not explain how the goals are given and still leaves it up to virtue of character the task of setting the moral goals. The advantage of this interpretation is that the task of choosing the things towards the goals becomes more than a mere choice of the most efficient means of achieving a goal; it has moral value because the deliberation demands a moral sensitivity to contextually determine what is the realization of the chosen goal. This contextual sensitivity is aligned with Aristotle's view of *phronesis*, which is contextually sensitive in regard to moral actions (*NE* 1142a23-30 and 1143a32-33).

In my view, this last interpretation offers a philosophically and morally interesting view about deliberation. Deliberation is not seen as a mere ability to calculate efficient means to achieve goals. Deliberation also has moral importance. It contributes to the contextual delimitation of the goals and values adopted by individuals. In this view, there is no space to say that *phronesis* is a mere slave of the passions. The means for which *phronesis* is responsible are morally relevant. It is not just about efficiency but also about the correct understanding of which action will realize a certain moral goal or value in a given context. This demands moral sensitivity to grasp the morally relevant features of the circumstances before a decision for which action must be performed takes place. In adopting this interpretation, I avoid a crude Humean version of the role played by *phronesis*. The role played by *phronesis* in deliberation is not reduced to find out efficient means-end relations.

In spite of the advantages of such a kind of view, one problem still persists: which capacity does give the goal specified by *phronesis*? Is it *phronesis* itself? Or should we adopt a partial Humean interpretation and say that virtue of character provides moral goals? The passage T11 seems to discourage any attempt to claim that deliberation has a say on the task of providing the goals. The examples brought by Aristotle to illustrate his view about deliberation are very clear about this point. For him, the doctor does not deliberate about whether he will make their patients healthy, not even the public speaker whether he will persuade the audience. In the case of the political expert, he does not deliberate whether he will promote a good government. The promotion of health, persuasion, and good government are goals that must be taken for granted when the doctor, the public speaker, and the political expert begin their deliberation respectively. If we consider the doctor, the public speaker, and the political expert *qua* individuals, they can have goals different from the profession they practise. The doctor *qua* individual can kill someone who he is taking care of because this person inflicted some grave injustice against one of the doctor's friends. The doctor, then, gives a wrong medicament or more than what is needed in order to kill this patient. The doctor does not practice his craft *qua* doctor in this case, but he uses his knowledge to

pursue an end distinct from what is given by medicine. The same takes place with the other examples. The public speaker *qua* public speaker must persuade the public, just as the political expert *qua* political expert must carry out a good government. What matters for my point is that in all the cases brought by Aristotle there is no deliberation about ends. The ends are taken for granted and deliberation begins by having in view these ends. Deliberation assumes an end as its starting point to begin. This does not exclude the possibility that what is a goal in a given deliberation can be a mean to further another goal, as the example from the first kind of interpretation shows. The only restriction here is that, for deliberating, a goal must be assumed. This situation makes us wonder whether there is a goal, or goals, in which deliberation stops. For the time being, I leave this question open. In the next section, I will address it. Now back to the investigation into deliberation.

In the final part of the investigation into deliberation, Aristotle advances also some claims about *prohairesis*. Let's see:

T12. βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτό, πλὴν ἀφορισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν· τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθὲν προαιρετὸν ἐστίν. παύεται γὰρ ἕκαστος ζητῶν πῶς πράξει, ὅταν εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναγάγῃ τὴν ἀρχήν, καὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἡγούμενον· τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ προαιρούμενον. δῆλον δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχαίων πολιτειῶν, ὡς Ὅμηρος ἐμμεῖτο· οἱ γὰρ βασιλεῖς ἂ προείλοντο ἀνήγγελλον τῷ δήμῳ. ὄντος δὲ τοῦ προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτικὴ ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν· ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν. ἢ μὲν οὖν προαίρεσις τύπῳ εἰρήσθω, καὶ περὶ ποῖά ἐστι καὶ ὅτι τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη (NE 1113a2-14).

What we deliberate about and what we decide by *prohairesis* are the same, except that what is decided by *prohairesis* is, as such, something definite; for it is what has been selected as a result of deliberation that is “decided by *prohairesis*”. For each person ceases to investigate how he will act, at whatever moment he brings the origin of the action back to himself, and to the leading part of himself; for this is the part that decides. This is clear also from those ancient forms of government that Homer used to represent in his poems: the kings would announce to the people what they had decided. Given that what is decided by *prohairesis* is an object of deliberated desire among the things that depend on us, *prohairesis* too will be deliberational desire for things that depend on us; for it is through having selected on the basis of having deliberated that we desire in accordance with our deliberation. Let this, then, stand as our outline treatment of *prohairesis* – both of what sorts of things it has to do with, and of the fact that what we decide by *prohairesis* are the things that forward our ends.

This passage retrieves the topic of *prohairesis* and relates it to the notion of deliberation. From the passage, it is clear that *prohairesis* is the result of deliberation and that both are about the same object. What distinguishes them is the fact that, while *prohairesis* is already determined, deliberation is not. I have defended in the previous section that *prohairesis* is conceived of as a general purpose that already specifies to some extent the realization of the goals adopted by individuals. The fact of being described as already definite (ἀφορισμένον ἤδη) seems to give support to this view. These general purposes are already definite in the sense of being stable prescriptions about how to act. The idea is that *prohairesis* is already a product of deliberation.

However, someone could argue that the use of “definite” here applies to the final decision about what must be done, which is something completely determined. To defend my preference for the first option, I can argue that the view of *prohairesis* as general purposes as opposed to decision is supported by the non-technical uses of the word “*prohairesis*”, as well as the reference that Aristotle makes to *prohairesis* as a target that *phronesis* has in view, demonstrating a view of *prohairesis* more in line with the notion of purpose than decision (*NE* 1144a20-22). Moreover, in the investigation into *prohairesis* this concept is linked to the idea of having deliberated previously. This seems to support the view that *prohairesis* involves deliberation *in advance* and, therefore, it is more suitable to think of *prohairesis* in terms of purpose than in terms of decision. For these reasons, I think it is best to avoid seeing in the expression “already definite” (ἀφορισμένον ἤδη) evidence to take *prohairesis* in terms of decision.

Another important aspect of the passage is how *prohairesis* is related to desire. According to the passage, desire is present in two moments of the *prohairesis*. In a first moment, Aristotle classifies what is decided by *prohairesis* as an object of deliberated desire (βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ). With this description, Aristotle points out that *prohairesis* is the result of a desire that goes through the process of deliberation, that is, the goal adopted by the agent through his desire¹⁷⁰ is made more precise through a deliberation about how to achieve this goal. In the sequence, Aristotle argues that desire is also about the means found by deliberation to achieve the adopted goal. He says that after having deliberated we desire in accordance with our deliberation (κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν)¹⁷¹. These claims show that *prohairesis* is not only constituted by thought, represented by deliberation, but it also involves desire. In *prohairesis*, there is a desiderative element attached to it. This aspect is retrieved in *NE* VI when Aristotle calls the virtuous person’s *prohairesis* ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς and ὄρεξις διανοητική (*NE* 1139b4-5). The difference between *NE* III.3 and VI.2 is that in the first text Aristotle seems to be interested in a *general* account of *prohairesis* while in the second he turns his attention to an account of the *virtuous individual’s* *prohairesis*. This gives rise to certain difficulties to understand which kind of desire is involved in each of these accounts. In the case of akratic and enkratic individuals, *prohairesis* and desire are in opposition. And the desires that oppose *prohairesis* in this case are non-rational (*NE* 1111b15-16). Consequently, their *prohairesis* does not seem to involve non-rational desires. The account of *prohairesis* found in *NE* VI.2 does not

¹⁷⁰ In *NE* 1113a15, Aristotle states clearly the relation between wish, a rational desire, and moral goals.

¹⁷¹ The manuscript M^b and also Aspasio propose another lesson to the passage. Instead of κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν (according to deliberation), the proposal is κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν (according to wish). Philosophically, I prefer the first option. Here are some reasons. What Aristotle intends to show is that desire follows what was decided by *prohairesis*. That the agent desires the means reached by deliberation is something expected because the deliberation plays the role of specifying in achievable ways the goal adopted by desire. As a consequence, the desire for the means of an action is ultimately a desire for achievable ways of realizing the goal adopted.

apply to them. In the account found in *NE* VI.2, character, responsible for the non-rational desires, is in harmony with reason in the *prohairesis* (*NE* 1139a33-34). In the case of the general account of *prohairesis* in *NE* III.3, this account also applies for akratic's and enkratic's *prohairesis*. The problem is that Aristotle also says in this account that desire is involved in *prohairesis*. But, as I have shown, *prohairesis* and desires are at odds in akratic and enkratic individuals. One way out is to understand that the kind of desire that Aristotle makes reference to in *NE* III.3 is wish, which was said previously to be akin (σύνεγγυς) to *prohairesis* (*NE* 1111b20). Wish seems to be a kind of rational desire¹⁷², a condition that sets it apart from the non-rational desires under character's responsibility. *Prohairesis* in general is followed by a wish to realized what was deliberated, while virtuous *prohairesis* requires in addition the desires under character's responsibility (*NE* 1139a33-34). In both cases, *prohairesis* is constituted by a combination of cognitive and desiderative elements.

At the end of the investigation, the picture of *prohairesis* is of a complex ethical concept. It has a twofold nature, constituted by desiderative and cognitive elements. Moreover, it occupies a middle position between the goal and the contextual decision of what to do. At the same time *prohairesis* already gives a more precise delimitation of the goal to be pursued, it still demands further specification in the circumstances.

4.6. Moral Goals and the Leading Role of Reason

Two questions about the labour division that deserve a closer look are how the goals are fixed and which capacity fixes them. The interpretation of deliberation I have provided demonstrates that in Aristotle's ethics there is philosophical room to conceive of deliberation as playing an important role in the circumstantial delimitation of goals and also as deliberating about intermediate goals. The first feature avoids taking deliberation as a mere capacity to instrumentally find out means-end relationships; the second shows that the notion of goal can be relativized to accommodate deliberation about goals which can be described as means when considered in a larger chain of means-goal. In virtue of it, a crucial question remains: is there any goal or set of goals that cannot be object of deliberation? If not, then I would have to agree with the claim that deliberation is also about goals, even in the case of non-intermediate goals. What makes this philosophical question more dramatic is the fact that Aristotle does not recognize explicitly that deliberation is also about goals. Rather, he insists on the claim that it is about what forwards the goals. Even when the concept of goals is relativized and one thinks of larger chains of means-goal,

¹⁷² For a defence of wish as a rational desire, see page 47.

it remains the fact that these chains must have a stop. Then, the question arises again: which capacity provides the goal(s) that stops this chain?

In Humean interpretations, the goal passages examined in the last chapter answer to that question by claiming that virtue of character provides the moral goals. I have argued that this kind of interpretation of the goal passages is not the most suitable. On many occasions, Aristotle states clearly that character must follow reason and obey it. Aristotle assigns to reason the leading role in actions, that is, reason appears as being the capacity that conducts character in actions. Aristotle does not seem to restrict this leading role only to the delimitation of means. Reason also seems to be occupied with the goals pursued. But there are some problems to ascribe to Aristotle this position. The first is that Aristotle does not say clearly that reason is responsible for the moral goals. He uses the vocabulary of obedience to talk about the role that reason has in regard to character in a virtuous soul. Moreover, when Aristotle investigates the virtues of thought in *NE VI*, he does not seem interested in revealing any rational capacity responsible for the moral goal. Rather, the most important practical capacity investigated in book VI is *phronesis* and on many occasions it is linked to deliberation (*NE* 1140a25-26, 1140a30-31, 1141b8-10, and 1142b31-32). Aristotle does not give much attention to the topic of choice of goals and remains quiet about it for most of the time. This situation is philosophically baffling because the choice of moral goals is expected to be a central topic in Aristotle's ethics. To understand how human beings choose their way of living and the values to be pursued is a topic of utmost philosophical interest. Nevertheless, against the expectations Aristotle displays more interest in understanding how to realize the goals adopted than in how they are chosen.

In *NE*'s book I, we learn that the ultimate goal is *eudaimonia*. This goal is presented by Aristotle as being the last goal, not being desired and not done for the sake of anything else. What is the content of *eudaimonia* and what qualifies as the right answer to the question: *what is eudaimonia?* is a matter of controversy even in Aristotle's time. People choose different things as *eudaimonia* depending on their personal circumstances. Aristotle defends that *eudaimonia* consists in an activity of the soul based on virtue. I do not intend to debate the intricacies involved in the concept of *eudaimonia*¹⁷³. What is important to me is that Aristotle assumes a connexion between the exercise of reason, expressed in his definition of *eudaimonia*, and the particular virtues investigated in books III-V. Through the exercise of the virtues the moral agent fulfils his proper human activity¹⁷⁴. The virtues represent different moral fields in which the right action, the mean, must be targeted and hit. Generosity, temperance, courage, magnificence, magnanimity, and justice

¹⁷³ To a detailed discussion about the concept of *eudaimonia* and also about the scholarly discussion about the inclusive-dominant debate, see Hobuss 2009a.

¹⁷⁴ At least in the case of the second best life, which is the political one (*NE* 1178a9-16).

are moral values that must be pursued in the actions carried out by individuals. Therefore, these are in some sense goals that are aimed at when virtuous agents act. In the particular actions, individuals seek to determine how these moral goals are attained. Determining the correct particular realization of these goals is to strike the mean and the fine. Virtues are a mean between two vices (*NE* 1106a26-b35, 1108b30-1109a20); the virtues above are a mean in each of their moral spheres. One interpretative possibility to understand the non-intermediate goals is to see in the values investigated by Aristotle ultimate goals that guide the moral individual and which are seen by the virtuous individuals as constituting what it means to live an *eudaimon* life. For Aristotle, the exercise of reason in practical life occurs through the realization of these values. Therefore, these seem to be good candidates to the position of non-intermediate goals. Someone may claim that these values are ultimately for the sake of *eudaimonia* and, then, *eudaimonia* would be the ultimate goal. This is a fair objection. Indeed, these values represent more precise delimitations of what constitutes *eudaimonia*. However, a delimitation of *eudaimonia* in these terms is made only by virtuous individuals. A vicious individual will promote opposite values in his actions. That everybody aims at *eudaimonia* is something granted by Aristotle (*NE* 1095a17-20, 1097b22-24). The important question lies in understanding how individuals adopt virtuous values as being what they see as *eudaimonia* and as a good life.

Irwin ascribes the delimitation of *eudaimonia* to deliberation (1975, p. 571-572). For Moss, upbringing fixes our moral goals through habituation of character (2012, p. 197). Now we are back to the famous question of the labour division: which capacity is responsible for the adoption of moral goals? In my view, this kind of question accepts different answers depending on the moral condition of whom we have in view. The examples of the different moral dispositions given by Aristotle is a clear demonstration that different capacities can play the role of giving the goal to be pursued. In vicious and akratic individuals, their non-rational part is gratified in their actions. These individuals pursue whatever satisfies their appetite. In virtuous individuals, the moral life is lived in accordance with reason. And reason occupies the central place. In vicious and akratic individuals, the non-rational desires command the goals of the moral life; in virtuous individuals, reason does this job.

After these remarks, the question proposed above can now receive a new formulation: which capacity *should* give our goals? Here Aristotle's answer is more precise. As I have shown in chapter 3, on many occasions Aristotle makes clear that in a virtuously structured soul reason must have the leading role. The problem is that he never spells out *which* rational capacity is indeed responsible for the moral goal. The terms he uses when discussing the interplay between character and reason are “λόγος” (for instance, *NE* 1095a10, 1102b28, 1119b14-18, and 1169a5) and “νοῦς”

(NE 1144b12-13, 1168b34-35, and 1169a17-18). The word “λόγος” is a broad term and does not make reference to any specific kind of rationality. In the passages where “λόγος” is employed, Aristotle seems to put character under reason’s guidance but without going further to say exactly which rational capacity he has exactly in mind. Although this makes his claim vague, it does not overturn it. The word “νοῦς”, by its turn, seems to capture a more specific function of reason. It is famous the discussion of theoretical *nous* in *APo.* II.19. The notion of practical *nous* is briefly discussed twice in *NE* VI (1142a25-30 and 1143a35-b14). What calls the attention is the fact that the discussion in 1143a35-b14¹⁷⁵, where the practical *nous* receives more attention, is rather cryptic and does not state in clear terms the contribution of *nous* to the moral goals¹⁷⁶. Moreover, it is at least curious the fact that *phronesis* receives much more attention than *nous*. This amounts to recognizing that Aristotle seems to have given more attention to a virtue of thought responsible for the things towards the goals than to a virtue responsible for moral goals.

These are some issues related to the task of providing details about *which* rational capacity settles the moral goals. But, in my view, regardless of these issues, there is enough evidence to claim that Aristotle defends that in a virtuously structured soul reason must guide character, although he unfortunately does not give the topic the attention I think it deserves.

Now there is the issue related to how we fix our moral values. It seems to me that there is not one single answer to this issue. For some people, upbringing will fix the values they will pursue for the rest of their lives. In the case of virtuous individuals that received a good upbringing, it begins with the habituation of non-rational desires and then it gradually involves reason and reflection about values and ways of acting. In the case of vicious individuals with bad upbringings, in their childhood they sought to satisfy their non-rational desires. When they grow up, they continue to act for the sake of their appetites. But it is not only upbringing that may fix our goals. In chapter 2, I have insisted on the possibility of change of character. In this case, the individual due to new influences in life¹⁷⁷ may start a new way of living and gradually change to an opposite moral condition. In this case, change may start through a reflection about the kind of life someone is living¹⁷⁸. Akratic and enkratic individuals are a proof that reason can be at odds with character and,

¹⁷⁵ For a detailed discussion of this passage, see Dahl 1984, p. 35-60, 237-246. For a discussion of theoretical and practical *nous*, see Morrison 2019, p. 219-248.

¹⁷⁶ The notion of *nous* also appears unexpectedly in the discussion about the interplay between virtue of character and *phronesis* in *NE* VI.12-13. When Aristotle discusses why it is not possible to have virtue of character without also having *phronesis*, he introduces the word “νοῦς” to say that, without it, virtue of character is morally harmful (*NE* 1144b9, 12). It is not clear whether νοῦς is equivalent to *phronesis* in the passage or whether it introduces another capacity in the moral sphere. For the main claim of my thesis, this aspect does not matter at all. For me, what matters is that Aristotle assigns to a rational capacity, whichever it is, the role of seeing the moral goal to be achieved. If this point is well establish, my view holds. For my interpretation of this passage, see section 3.12.

¹⁷⁷ See footnote 54.

¹⁷⁸ Even though Moss defends fiercely that upbringing fixes our moral goals, she softens her claim at some point by saying that upbringing is the natural way of fixing our character given the way we develop morally, but she

therefore, a character with wrong desires does not determine what is found as good by reason. Also punishments can be inflicted to those who act wrongly so that pain plays the role of changing character¹⁷⁹ (*NE* 1104b16-18, 1180a4-12). Laws can also play a persuading role so that individuals act correctly (*NE* 1144a14-16) and occasionally become virtuous. A new habituation of character in which individuals gradually change their way of living and moral values is not to be completely ruled out. All these suggestions demonstrate the complexity of the issue about the acquisition of moral goals. It seems that there is neither a unique answer nor a unique route to the acquisition of a virtuous disposition.

recognizes that it is not the unique way: “or rather, this is the normal and natural way for us to acquire values, even if things can happen otherwise. Consider the context for the most famous Goal passage. Aristotle is addressing the objection that *phronesis* is useless; the response is that it plays an important functional role: ‘The [human] function is achieved in accordance with *phronesis* and character virtue: for virtue makes the goal right, *phronesis* the things toward it’ (*NE* vi 12.1144a6–9). These are the natural, teleological roles for virtue and *phronesis* – it is for the sake of their performing these roles that we are by nature equipped to have them. Perhaps sometimes it is not character virtue but instead some form of reasoning that gives us our goals: arguably this is what happens to akratic and enkratic (weak-willed and self-controlled) types, who have the right goal without having good characters (vii 8). But that is not how we are meant by nature to get our values, and if you do get your values this way – as, for example, someone does when she is proselytized into a new religion or ethos or moral philosophy – there will be tension between your character and your values that may keep you from acting on your values (and thus from really having them as values), and certainly will keep you from living a well-functioning, *eudaimon* life” (Moss 2014, p. 239-240).

¹⁷⁹ An account of the role of pain in moral development is found in Curzer 2002. My main objection against Curzer is that the paper seems to take for granted the upbringing assumption.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I have provided some arguments for defending an interpretation of the labour division in which reason occupies a central place in the adoption of moral goals in virtuous individuals. Depending on which question we have in mind when approaching the labour division, different answers may be given. To the question: which capacity does provide the moral goals? The answer is both character and reason. However, to the question: which capacity does provide moral goals in a virtuous soul? Aristotle would clearly state that reason does the job in this case. In a virtuous soul, reason has a central place. This is made very clear in the *ergon* argument, in which a *eudaimon* life is defined in terms of activity of the part of the soul that has reason, based on virtue. In an ethical system that gives reason a central place, it would be very unlikely to assign to a non-rational part of the soul the fundamental task of providing moral goals in a virtuously structured soul. As I have shown, pieces of evidence in favour of this claim are found not only in the *ergon* argument but also, for instance, in the discussion of moral psychology in *NE* I.13, of temperance in *NE* III.12, and of self-love in *NE* IX.8.

In regard to Aristotle's moral psychology and his classification of virtues, I have argued that there is small room to defend that virtue of character is partially rational in the sense of possessing reason and exercising thought. Virtue of character has reason only in the very precise sense of being able to listen to reason's prescriptions. It is rational only *insofar as* it obeys reason. Its rationality is not a product of exercising thought but comes from the fact of being guided by reason. When this kind of interaction is not present, character lacks any kind of rationality. Its rationality is conceived of in terms of obedience to reason.

I have argued that the goal passages, that is, passages in which Aristotle seems to defend a Humean division of tasks, need not be necessarily interpreted as claiming that character is responsible for the moral goals. These passages must be read by taking into account the wider context in which they take place and also the wider framework of the interactions between character and reason in the different kinds of moral dispositions. I have provided an alternative interpretation of the goal passages. In my view, the main claim of these passages is that a virtuous character makes the non-rational desires to be directed towards the correct goals, which are given by a rational capacity. This is how the claim that virtue of character makes the goal right must be taken.

Moreover, I have argued in favour of a notion of deliberation that avoids taking it as an instrumentally efficient calculation of means-end. The kind of interpretation I have defended argues that deliberation demands a moral sensitivity to realize contextually which action qualifies as a realization of the moral value adopted by the moral agent as worth pursuing. Such an interpretation

introduces moral worth to the task of choosing the ways of realizing moral goals. The choice of what forwards the goals cannot be reduced to an issue of mere ability of finding out ways of realizing goals, but it must be seen as also implying moral sensitivity to grasp how moral values and goals are brought into being in our actions.

Given my construal of Aristotle's claims, there seems to be small room to argue that in a virtuously structured soul character sets the moral goals. Perhaps, this claim holds in the case of vicious individuals.

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