

ENACTING VIRTUE

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A thesis presented for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2017

I, Margaret Róisín Hampson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about how we develop as moral agents and come to realise the virtuous activity on which flourishing depends. Aristotle's account of how this is effected is familiar: we become virtuous through practice of the actions in which virtue finds its expression. But how should we understand the difference between the doings of the learner and the activity of the virtuous agent, and what is it that happens when a learner does these things that results in her realisation of virtuous activity?

Whilst both agents perform virtuous actions, the two are engaged in different activities: one is in the process of acquiring a disposition, the other is engaged in its exercise. But we can also see each as related to the actions they perform in different ways. The learner is not yet the author of her actions in the strict sense that the virtuous agent is, who chooses these actions as an expression of a settled way of seeing and valuing things; indeed, the learner's actions stand in the relation of copy to those of the virtuous agent, or so I argue. How, then, does the learner's practice of these alienable actions result in her becoming an author of virtuous actions in the strict sense?

I argue that by seeing the learner as engaged in the imitation of a virtuous agent we can begin to explain this transition. In imitating a virtuous agent and adopting her perspective, the learner is positioned so as to perceive the value of virtuous action, and thus to discover its attraction. With the aid of Aristotle's psychological works, I offer a picture of the learner's habituation which shows how it is that through acting, her perceptions, desires and other capacities are shaped in such a way that she comes eventually to perceive things and to act in the way that the virtuous agent does.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first and deepest thanks are owed to my primary supervisor, Fiona Leigh, who has guided me from the very beginning of this project, and indeed since I joined UCL on the MPhil Stud. Those who know Fee will know her passion for teaching and the care she devotes to all of her students, whether first year tutees or final year PhDs. Her support has been incredible, and her example as a teacher is one I can only hope to follow. I hope that in completing the PhD this is just the beginning, and not the end, of our philosophical discussions, and friendship.

Over the last three years I have also had the pleasure of working with MM McCabe during her tenure as Keeling Scholar in Residence at UCL. The speed and creativity of MM's thought can be astonishing, and there are connections that MM made in our first meetings that only much later have I come to appreciate myself. I left every meeting with MM excited by what we had discussed, and I thank her deeply for her generosity.

This thesis owes a less direct, but by no means small, debt to my two undergraduate supervisors – James Warren and Eric James – who did so much to shape my early philosophical thinking and from whom I learned to appreciate philosophy's history. It is thanks to both of their encouragement, moreover, that I embarked on graduate studies in philosophy; I remain ever grateful for this.

Since 2010 my home has been in the Philosophy Department at UCL, and I cannot imagine a better place to have spent these last 7 years. It is a department that thrives, and does so thanks in small part to the collaborative approach that is fostered between students and staff. I owe thanks to all the staff whose seminars I have attended over the last 7 years, and in particular Mark Calderon for the many helpful insights he has offered in our conversations about the ancient and later tradition. Especial thanks are also owed to Richard Edwards and Helen Pascoe without whose work behind the scenes no thesis would ever be submitted.

A happy feature of being an ancient philosopher at UCL is that one has a second home with the Ancient Philosophers at Kings. I wish to thank all the staff and students who have attended the Thursday Reading Group over these years and from whom I have learned so much. In particular, I wish to thank Katharine, Sarah, Saloni and Freya, and my friends in the Lyceum Society – Niels, Tonguç, Branislav, Enrique, Taichi, Chandler and Kyo-Sun – both for their helpful feedback over summer WIP, and for making Thursday afternoons something to look forward to.

What has made my experience at UCL so memorable is of course the graduate philosophy community. It has been a great privilege to be part of this community, and I must acknowledge everyone who has worked in the Tim L Short Memorial Library, attended the ‘Žižek Reading Group’ or taken part in Friday Crosswords: Ed N, Ed L, Henry, Maarten, Chris, Daniel, Kathrine, Emily, Maddie, Alec, Sen, Eliana, Vanessa, Hannah, Tony, Ashley, Pete, Dan, Ben, Andrew, Jonas, Julian, David, Charles, Polly, Catherine, Michael, Oda and honorary UCL students Ilaria & Karoline. I owe special thanks to Josephine and Elena who have both been such a great support throughout the writing up process, and Edgar and Showkat for their companionship this year in Room 303. I owe the title of this thesis to Max Edwards, and its formatting to the generous assistance of Alex Geddes. I thank all especially for their friendship.

It is difficult to express adequately what the friendship of the GSDC over these years at UCL has meant, so I simply thank Léa, Tom, Tim, Alex, Karine and Laura for being such a *kalon* group of friends. Three non-philosophers also deserve a mention: Chris Jones, who has been something of an academic mentor since 2005, Stuart Bell, for help translating *l’habitude* and his company in Camberwell Library, and of course Elizabeth Graham.

I wish to thank my parents for all their support throughout my studies, and for always having promoted the value of learning for its own sake. I thank my dad too for generously reading and discussing much of this thesis. Finally, I wish to express my love and sincerest gratitude to Jerome Pedro for his unwavering support – and, indeed, his great tolerance of his *de facto* status as a UCL philosopher for these last 7 years.

*

This thesis has only been possible thanks to the generous funding of the S.V. Keeling bequest.

A NOTE ON PRONOUNS

Throughout this thesis I refer to the student of virtue and the mature virtuous agent using the female pronoun. I am of course aware that for Aristotle the development of virtue proper was restricted to men (*Pol.* I 13), and that the male pronoun would perhaps to this extent be more appropriate. I hope, however, that the reader will see this use of the female pronoun not as a textual inaccuracy but, as it is intended, as a small attempt to liberate Aristotle's account of flourishing and our development as moral beings from one of the less attractive aspects of his philosophy.¹

¹ An alternative perhaps would be 'they', used in the gender neutral singular; this, though, is awkward when put in reflexive form ('themselves', 'themselves?'), so I opt instead to speak of the virtuous agent *herself*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARISTOTLE

DA – De Anima

EE – Eudemian Ethics

Insomn. – De Insomoniis

MA – De Motu Animalium

Mem. – De Memoria et Reminiscentia

Met. – Metaphysics

NE – Nicomachean Ethics

PA – Parts of Animals

Pol. – Politics

Rhet. – Rhetoric

PLATO

Parm. – Parmenides

Phd. – Phaedo

Rep. – Republic

Symp. – Symposium

INTRODUCTION

BECOMING VIRTUOUS

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is a deeply practical work. Its famous opening line points to a concern about the good,¹ but we soon discover that the good in which Aristotle is interested is the human good, and that his inquiry is undertaken in order to discover how we may lead a flourishing human life. Such a life, Aristotle argues, depends on our excellent activity as rational beings, and an examination of the human excellences takes up much of the rest of the work. The picture he presents both of *eudaimonia* and of virtuous activity is in many ways highly attractive, particularly in its suggestion that how well our lives go is importantly determined by what we do and in its emphasis on our own activity in the constitution of our happiness.

The practical focus of this investigation becomes more evident still in Book II, where Aristotle makes clear that the end of ethical inquiry is not to know what virtue consists in, but that we *become* good (1103b26-29). It is a claim that is repeated in the final chapter of the work when he writes again that:

the aim in practical things is not to study and know each thing, but rather to do them. Hence knowing about virtue is not sufficient, rather we must try to possess and to use it, or to become good in any other way?

οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς πρακτοῖς τέλος τὸ θεωρῆσαι ἕκαστα καὶ γινῶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ πράττειν αὐτά: οὐδὲ δὴ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἰκανὸν τὸ εἰδέναι, ἀλλ' ἔχειν καὶ χρῆσθαι πειρατέον, ἢ εἴ πως ἄλλως ἀγαθοὶ γινόμεθα; (1179a35-b4).

Indeed, the topic of moral development is one that effectively bookends the work. After the programmatic discussion of Book I it is with this topic that Aristotle begins his examination afresh in Book II, and with this again that he concludes the work in X 9, as a segue to the *Politics*. The issue of our *becoming* virtuous is, I submit, a central concern of Aristotle's.

¹ “Every craft, and inquiry, and likewise every action and decision seems to seek some good; that is why people were right to declare that the good is what everyone seeks (πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ πᾶσα μέθοδος, ὁμοίως δὲ πράξις τε καὶ προαίρεσις, ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ἐφίεσθαι δοκεῖ: διὸ καλῶς ἀπεφήναντο τὰγαθόν, οὗ πάντ' ἐφίεται)” (1094a1-3).

Translations from *Nicomachean Ethics* are based loosely on Irwin (1999), with modifications.

Aristotle holds, as we discover in *NE* II 1, that virtue is not something possessed by nature,² but which must be developed; nature however makes it possible for us to develop the virtues (1103a25). We are beings, it seems, born with a certain nature, but whose perfection and well-being consists not, as in the case of plants and other animals, in a life lived according to what might be referred to as our ‘first’ nature, but in the acquisition and exercise of a ‘second nature’. Unlike plants, but like animals, we are beings who perceive, who have bodily appetites and who are thus capable of voluntary action (111a26), seeking out and pursuing those things in our environment which will satisfy our appetites. This characterises both our behaviour as children, when we act almost entirely, it seems, on the basis of pleasures and pains (1105a2-7) and also the behaviour of those who have not undergone the moral education Aristotle recommends.³ But unlike animals, we are also capable of a distinctive kind of action – that is, *praxis* – action which expresses our settled values. We are beings whose perceptions, desires, beliefs and so on can be educated in such a way that we come to see, and to value, what is in fact good, and to act on this basis. It is in coming to be in this state and to engage in its corresponding activity that we achieve perfection as moral beings, and thus *eudaimonia* too.⁴ Our becoming virtuous, and the process by which this takes place, is the topic of this thesis.

So how is it that we come to acquire this second nature and to act in this distinctive way? Aristotle’s answer to the question of how we become virtuous and to realise mature virtuous activity is familiar to many: we become good through a process of habituation. The account he offers, however, is also one that may strike us as frustratingly incomplete, and my aim in this thesis is to understand what this process consists in and how it effects the kind of transformation Aristotle claims that it does.

² As Lawrence notes (2012, p.245), Aristotle does not explain whether having virtue ‘by nature’ would entail that we are born with it fully formed, like our capacity for sight, or that it is something that develops, but does so ‘naturally’, like physical growth. In any case, it is evident that virtue is not possessed by nature, since nothing ‘natural’, Aristotle tells us, can be habituated (*ἐθίζεται*) into another condition: stone, no matter how many times it is thrown upwards, will always continue to fall down, whilst fire cannot be made to move downwards (1103a19-23), but it is evident that legislators do make citizens good by habituating them (1103b3-4).

³ These people live according to feeling, pursuing their proper pleasures and the sources of them, and avoiding the opposing pains (*πάθει γὰρ ζῶντες τὰς οικείας ἡδονὰς διώκουσι καὶ δι’ ὧν αὐταὶ ἔσσονται, φεύγουσι δὲ τὰς ἀντικειμένας λύπας*, 1179b13-14).

⁴ Aristotle of course famously argues in Book X that the life of morally virtuous activity takes second place to the life of intellectual contemplation (*NE* X 7-8); a fully *eudaimon* life would seem then to depend ultimately on our realisation of this intellectual activity, and indeed it remains an interesting and yet largely unexamined question how this is to be achieved. My concern in this thesis is with our development as moral beings, on which Aristotle is almost entirely focused, and the process by which this is effected. A further topic would be to examine our development in the sphere of intellectual contemplation, and indeed the question of how this relates to the moral development I discuss in this thesis. Some interesting thoughts can be found at the end of Whiting (2002).

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS II 1

Book II opens with the distinction, introduced in I 13, between what Aristotle calls ‘virtue of thought’ or ‘intellectual virtue’ (ἡ διανοητική) and ‘virtue of character’ or ‘moral virtue’ (ἡ ἠθική); the virtues of thought comprising both practical and theoretical wisdom, and a further list of excellences detailed in Book VI, the virtues of character comprising courage, temperance and justice, as well as the more minor virtues of Book IV. Whilst the distinction between the two forms of virtue was drawn in I 13 in terms of a certain division of the soul (see Ch.1, §1.2.1), the distinction is now, in Book II, drawn in terms of their modes of acquisition. Intellectual virtue, Aristotle tells us, arises and grows for the most part from teaching,⁵ and thus it requires experience and time (1103a15-17).⁶ Virtue of character, however, results from habit (ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται), hence the name ‘ethical’, slightly varied from ‘*ethos*’ (1103a17-18).⁷ Indeed, that Aristotle begins his examination with the question of development rather than definition speaks again to the practical focus of the work.⁸

⁵ Certainly it is worth noting that here Aristotle only claims that the intellectual virtues are acquired ‘mostly’ through instruction (τὸ πλεῖον ἐκ διδασκαλίας), which might allow for one of two things. Either he means that the intellectual virtues are mostly acquired through instruction, but that other modes of learning may also contribute to their development, or he means that most, but not all, intellectual virtues are acquired through instruction. In either case, this might allow for the interesting possibility that practical wisdom is acquired not (only) through instruction but also/rather through the process of doing just things that produces the moral virtues.

⁶ As Broadie notes, the claim that the acquisition of intellectual virtue involves ‘experience and time’, appearing as it does in the distinction between the character and intellectual virtues, would suggest that it is intended as a point of contrast between the two. If this is so, the claim surely cannot be that the student of virtue needs experience and time *as a learner* to acquire the intellectual virtues, for Aristotle would surely allow that it takes experience and time to acquire the character virtues as well (see also Hardie, 1968, p.100). Indeed, the fact that training in virtue starts from childhood (1103b24) and is not complete until maturity, in addition to the claim that the old and the wise see correctly, thanks to experience (1143b11-14), supports this thought. Broadie suggests, then, that Aristotle must instead mean that for the virtues of intellect, experience and time are required *before the instruction can begin*, whilst as we know from 1103b24, the character virtues must be inculcated from the earliest moments (Broadie, 1991, p.73).

Both Broadie (1991, p.73) and Taylor (2006, p.60) note the contrast between this passage and 1142a12-15, in which Aristotle explains that young people may excel in mathematics and certain sciences, but not have practical wisdom, since the latter requires experience. Broadie suggests that we should then take Aristotle to be referring at 1103a only to practical, and not to theoretical wisdom; Taylor instead presumes that Aristotle is speaking of what is true *hōs epì to polu*, allowing for the idea that there may be intellectual prodigies, but that ‘for the most part’ mastering a theoretical discipline requires a long period of instruction.

⁷ *EE* 1220a39-b3: “Character exists, as the name signifies, because it develops from habit, and a thing gets habituated as a result of a pattern of conduct that is not innate, by repeated movement of one sort of 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)” (trans. Inwood & Woolf).

⁸ Moreover, that the modes of acquisition are introduced here as that which distinguishes the virtues, indicates that understanding these should play as much of a role in our understanding of the nature of the virtues as his account of the parts of the soul and their functions. Compare with Aristotle’s remark at *Pol* I 2, where he writes that “he who considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them” (1252a24, trans. Jowett). This I believe is recognised by Gauthier & Jolif: “Nous verrons que l’exposé sur la nature de

INTRODUCTION

This process of habituation by which virtue of character is developed is not positively characterised at first, but rather contrasted with teaching and, following that, what is possessed ‘by nature’ (1103a18-19).⁹ Aristotle does not make clear, at this point, what he takes ‘teaching’ to involve, nor whether he takes these modes of acquisition to be exclusive or not; these are questions to which we will return in Chapter 1. By contrast with that which is possessed by nature, however, Aristotle explains that whilst ‘natural’ capacities such as sight are first possessed as a capacity, and subsequently exercised (1103a26-31), the virtues as with the *technai*, we acquire by having acted first (ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον). We do not acquire our capacities for seeing and hearing through frequent seeing and hearing, but in the case of the crafts and the virtues:

For the things we must do having learned, we learn by doing these things: men become builders, for instance, by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just things, temperate by doing temperate things, brave by doing brave things.

ἃ γὰρ δεῖ μαθόντας ποιεῖν, ταῦτα ποιοῦντες μανθάνομεν, οἷον οἰκοδομοῦντες οἰκοδόμοι γίνονται καὶ καθαρίζοντες καθαρισταί: οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ’ ἀνδρεία ἀνδρεῖοι (1103a30-b3).

And as he continues some lines later:

For, acting as we do in our dealings with men, some of us become just, some unjust; by acting as we do in terrifying situations, and accustoming ourselves to fear or to be confident some become brave, some cowardly. Likewise, with regards to things involving appetites and anger: for some become temperate, and mild, others intemperate and irascible, one lot through behaving in one way in these situations, the other by behaving in another way. To sum it up in one phrase: like states come about through like activities.

πράττοντες γὰρ τὰ ἐν τοῖς συναλλάγμασι τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γινόμεθα οἱ μὲν δίκαιοι οἱ δὲ ἀδικοί, πράττοντες δὲ τὰ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς καὶ ἐπιθυμίοις φοβεῖσθαι ἢ θαρρεῖν οἱ μὲν ἀνδρεῖοι οἱ δὲ δειλοί. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχει καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ὀργάς: οἱ μὲν γὰρ σώφρονες καὶ πρᾶοι γίνονται, οἱ δ’ ἀκόλαστοι καὶ ὀργίλοι, οἱ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ οὕτως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀναστρέφεσθαι, οἱ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ οὕτως. καὶ ἐνὶ δὴ λόγῳ ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται (1103b14-22).

Hence, he concludes, we must engage in the right activities and acquire the right sorts of habit right from youth. For this makes no little difference, but rather all the difference (1103b21-25).

la vertu, qui commence au chapitre 4, ne peut être détaché de l’examen de [la] question [‘comment acquiert-on la vertu morale?’]” (1959, Tome II.1, p.101).

⁹ The contrast between teaching, habit and the possession of a capacity by nature echoes the opening lines of the *Meno* (70a). It is worth considering whether Plato himself saw these as exclusive modes of acquisition, or whether the *Meno* discussion is set up to show the ways in which all three modes of acquisition or possession contribute to the formation of the virtues.

This account, in outline, will strike many readers as true; it is surely by engaging in certain sorts of actions or activities, conducting ourselves in one way or another, that we eventually become the sort of person who does the one thing or the other.¹⁰ Yet despite the seemingly evident nature of the account in outline, what Aristotle does not make clear is just what is involved in the practice of virtuous actions and how it is by engaging in such activity we acquire the moral virtues. Moreover, beyond the claim that the process by which we become good consists in our ‘doing just and temperate things’, Aristotle does not tell us what it is for something ‘to come about from habit’ (ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται) or what kind of process ‘habituation’ (ἐθισμός) is and just what it effects. Thus we may ask: what is this process of ‘habituation’, consisting in the practice of virtuous actions, and how does this result in the development of moral virtue? It is this question that I seek to address in what follows.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter ‘Becoming a Virtuous Agent’ is concerned with what we are seeking to explain and from where, and with what assumptions, we should begin our investigation. I submit that too often accounts of moral habituation in the *Ethics* are coloured by presuppositions about the nature of the terminate state: scholars tend to begin their investigations from one of two deeply entrenched views about the nature of the state of moral virtue, and to read the account of moral development in light of this, often with quite different results. One problem with this approach is that the developmental accounts that result from each view respectively will be deemed to have little merit by proponents of the opposing view, and owing to the deeply entrenched nature of the debate, a stalemate is quickly reached. Moreover, this approach tends to result in the foreclosure of many important questions, and on either side leads to the adoption of views that may be regarded as variously problematic.

As a way of making progress in developing an account of moral development through habituation, I propose that we reflect on what we are seeking to account for in producing such an account. I propose in Chapter 1 that we reframe our question, and ask not ‘how is the state of moral virtue acquired?’ but rather ‘how do we become virtuous agents and to realise mature virtuous activity?’ This shift in focus offers, I argue, a more neutral starting point and a picture of the end of habituation that can be more readily agreed upon by scholars. At the same time, it

¹⁰ Bostock, indeed, writes that “the main outline of his doctrine here is ... sufficiently clear, [that we may] pass over it in order to come at once to his account of what a virtue of character *is*, which begins in II.5” (2000, p.36).

better reflects our interest in Aristotle's picture of human flourishing insofar as it emphasises the importance of our own agency and activity, as discussed above.

Having encouraged this shift in focus, in the final parts of the chapter I argue that we should not at the outset of our investigation foreclose the question of what kind of process habituation is, and I encourage the reader in particular to see that the commonly held assumption that this process is 'non-rational' is not decisively supported by Aristotle's remarks in the *Ethics*. I argue not, as some do, that habituation *must* be in part an intellectual process, but rather that it is plausible that Aristotle had a quite expansive view of the process of 'doing just and temperate things'; in the absence of textual evidence to the contrary, we should not assume at the outset of our investigation that this process could not include, for example, various forms of guidance, reflection, and so forth. Our task is to consider just what this process of doing just things might involve, and what it is about doing these things that effects the kind of change described above.

Chapter 2, 'Practice and Praxis', takes a closer look at the distinction between the actions of a learner and the activity of a virtuous agent. I approach this question via a reading of Aristotle's famous (hypothetical) challenge to his virtue acquisition thesis and subsequent defence in *NE* II 4. I argue that certain assumptions about the nature of this challenge, and so the form that the solution takes, have obscured the insights this discussion affords, and argue that if the nature of the challenge is reconsidered, we can see Aristotle's discussion as much more relevant to our concerns. Aristotle's argument reveals that whilst both the learner and the virtuous agent perform virtuous actions, only the virtuous agent performs these *virtuously*, which depends on her knowing, her choosing such actions for their own sake, and her being in a stable state. I argue that this reveals the virtuous agent to be an author of her actions in a very strict sense, and moreover that the virtuous agent and her activity have a certain conceptual priority for Aristotle in thinking about virtuous action. Developmentally, however, the learner begins from actions that are in a sense alienable and must come to meet the conditions of virtuously performed action through the practice of these actions. Our task is then to explain how practice of alienable actions can result in the kind of strict authorship described by Aristotle.

In the third chapter, 'Development and Continuity', I turn from consideration of the activity of the mature agent to the action of a learner, and ask how we ought to conceive of this. I approach this via a demand that has been placed by various commentators on our conception of the learner's action, namely that it be seen as continuous with that of the virtuous agent. In the face of a concern recently raised about Aristotle's solution to the challenge in *NE* II 4 and the distinction between

the learner's action and that of a virtuous agent there defended, I argue not only that we have good grounds to defend this distinction, but that it does not entail the problems that this criticism supposes. To act virtuously is the end towards which the learner's practice is directed, and to say that a learner does not act in this way is to say that she has not yet achieved this end; as yet, we know very little about the learner's action itself.

In what follows, I consider more concretely how we should conceive of the learner's not yet virtuously performed action, and track a development in conceptions of her action in modern scholarship. I note first that it is now commonplace to suppose that the learner's action cannot be 'mindless' or 'mechanical', and instead must be seen to engage various of her cognitive capacities, and then examine a more recent proposal, according to which we should grant that a learner can and must act for the sake of the noble if the development of virtue is to be in any way intelligible. In response to this suggestion I show that this view is not mandated by the text, before raising a number of concerns both about the picture of what happens in the course of the learner's habituation that it assumes, and its failure to furnish an explanation of one of the phenomena we are seeking to explain. For it merely stipulates that the learner acts from a motivation, the development of which we are meant to be accounting for.

In Chapter 4, 'Imitating Virtue', I begin to develop a more positive account of the learner's habituation. I suggest that the explanatory challenge, as I have framed it, itself points to a way of understanding the learner's activity such that the development of virtuous agency and realisation of virtuous activity are intelligible. I argue that by seeing the learner as engaged in the imitation of the virtuous agent and the mature activity in which she engages, we can see first how she comes to acquire knowledge of virtuous action (in its particularity and variety), and the situations to which it is a response. But moreover, I argue that in imitating the virtuous agent the learner must adopt the perspective of this agent, a perspective which over time she comes to inhabit. From this perspective she is able to see the morally relevant features of situations and virtuous actions as a response to these, which I argue in the next chapter is essential to her coming to perceive the value of virtuous action. Finally, in imitating the virtuous agent by acting as she would in a given situation, the learner also begins to develop a conception of herself as the agent of virtuous actions.

In the fifth chapter, 'Perceiving the Fine', I focus more directly on the question of what it is that happens when a learner *does* just and temperate things, and argue that in doing these things she comes to perceive their fineness. In *NE* III-IV, discussion of the choice of virtuous actions for their own sake appears to be replaced by talk of choosing for the sake of the fine, and I suggest

that in examining how a learner comes to grasp the fineness of virtuous actions we are offered a more concrete route into the question of how she comes to choose virtuous action for its own sake. I argue that fineness is a feature of virtuous actions themselves, an objective property there to be discovered, which is perceptible in the doing of such actions. Moreover, I argue that to discriminate something as fine is, for Aristotle, to find it attractive or desirable; thus in perceiving the value of virtuous actions an agent is at the same time motivated to perform them. I argue, however, that one needs to be appropriately positioned in order to perceive the fineness of virtuous actions, and that it is this that the learner's imitation of a virtuous agent, and in particular the adoption of her perspective, enables her to do.

In the final chapter, 'Action and Affordances' I extend this account of what happens during the learner's practice of virtuous actions, by turning from the ethical to the psychological works. Taking Aristotle's account of the production of action in *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima* as a starting point, and noting the important role he assigns in these texts to the capacity of *phantasia* in the 'preparation' of desire that motivates action, I examine a number of recent attempts to explain what this role might be, before developing an account of my own. I argue that *phantasia* contributes to the preparation of desire and production of action by preserving perceptions of virtuous action and its fineness when an agent acts, and then representing these to the agent on occasions in the future. Thanks to *phantasia*, an agent 'sees' objects and situations as affording these action possibilities, which are apprehended as desirable. The picture I present, then, is one in which the agent sees the world in terms of action affordances, whilst at the same time her perception of the world, and the desires she has, are shaped *by* the way in which she acts.

The account that I offer, then, takes seriously Aristotle's claim that we become virtuous by performing virtuous actions, and offers an explanation of how it is that in actually doing these things a learner comes to discover their value and to perceive things just as the virtuous agent does. Whilst allowing that Aristotle might have a quite expansive view of what our practice of just and temperate things consists in – a view which allows for others to contribute to this process, for reflection on our doings and for progress to be made between occasions of acting – I take seriously the importance for Aristotle of our own agency and activity not just in our mature moral life, but in effecting our moral development. In essence, virtue – both in its mature form and its development – is something that must be enacted.

I BECOMING A VIRTUOUS AGENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We are seeking to understand how it is, according to Aristotle, we develop as moral beings. We saw in the Introduction that his answer is in one respect very clear: we become virtuous through a process of habituation (1103a170), or as he goes on to explain, “we become just by doing just things, temperate by doing temperate things, brave by doing brave things (τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ’ ἀνδρεῖα ἀνδρεῖοι)” (1103b1-2). What he does not make clear, however, is precisely what this involves, and how it is that in so doing an agent becomes virtuous.

This chapter is concerned with what it is we are trying to explain when we undertake an investigation of Aristotelian moral development, and with what assumptions we should begin this investigation. More specifically, I want to call attention to the fact that certain ways of thinking about the explanandum typically determine the kind of account of the developmental process that is then offered, and in a way that it often limiting. I will show that the way in which the explanatory project is typically framed, which takes our task to be to explain the process by which a certain state of character is acquired, occasions disagreement about how we should understand the nature of the developmental process, owing to a more deep-rooted disagreement about the nature of the state that is to be acquired. I will argue that presuppositions about the nature of this state tend to colour the accounts of the developmental process that are offered, and that the answers to many questions about the nature of this process and what it effects are thus decided in advance. If we adopt this framework, we are required, it seems, to take a position in this entrenched debate from the outset, and even if we attempt not to foreclose the various questions raised above about the developmental process, we nevertheless face the likely fact that proponents of the alternative position will be unconvinced by the developmental story then told.

Thus I will propose instead a different way of framing the explanatory task, putting the question in terms not of how a certain state of character is to be acquired, but how we become agents of a certain sort and to realise the virtuous activity on which our flourishing depends. This

new way of framing the explanatory project not only offers, I hope, a more neutral starting point for our investigation, but since Aristotle is clear that happiness consists not simply in being in a state, but in activity, our question is more closely tied to what is of importance to Aristotle with respect to achieving *eudaimonia*. Having motivated this shift in focus, I return to the question of the nature of the process through which virtue is developed, and argue that we should not foreclose the question of the nature of this process at the outset of our investigation.

1.2 THE ACQUISITION OF A STATE OF CHARACTER

It might reasonably be supposed that an account of the process by which we come to be morally virtuous will require us to first have a view of what it is, the development of which, we are trying to explain. Commentators seeking to offer an account of Aristotelian moral development tend then to focus on Aristotle's characterisation of moral virtue as a state (ἕξις) of character,¹ and thus suppose that the question that needs to be answered, when asking how it is we develop as moral beings, is how we come to acquire this state. With a conception of what kind of state moral virtue is in hand, commentators then approach Aristotle's discussion of development in *NE* II and elsewhere, and stipulate what kind of process would be necessary to effect this kind of state.

Later, I will propose an alternative way of thinking about what it is we should be trying to account for. But I should make clear at the outset that the traditional approach to the explanatory project – asking how we acquire the state of moral virtue and what kind of state this is – is not in itself an unreasonable approach. Indeed, one might consider this approach to be licensed precisely by Aristotle's own characterisation of moral virtue as a *hexeis* in *NE* II 5 and his repeated references to *hexeis* in the course of his discussion in Book II.² When we ask 'how do we become virtuous?', it is perfectly reasonable to think that, since moral virtue is a state, what we want to know is how we come to acquire this particular state.

The difficulty, we will see, is that there is a profound disagreement about how we should understand the nature of this state, what the state consists in, and thus just what it is we need to account for when explaining its development. This disagreement leads in turn to disagreement about how we should conceive of the process. I will suggest in due course that by framing our question in a different way, by asking, that is, not how we acquire a certain state, but how we

¹ Hutchinson (1986) notably centres his treatment of the virtues around Aristotle's concept of a *hexeis*.

² We saw in *NE* II 1 Aristotle claims that "like states arise from like activities" (ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται, 1103b21-22), which might license our asking how it is that a particular state comes to be through particular kinds of activities, and to consider then what must be involved in such activities that they give rise to such states.

become agents of a certain sort and to realise the mature virtuous activity Aristotle describes in Books II-IV, we can find more neutral ground within this debate, whilst also taking seriously Aristotle's insistence that the achievement of *eudaimonia* depends on our acting in a distinctive way. First, however, let us look at the traditional approach to the topic of Aristotelian moral development, and the disagreement that is found therein.

1.2.1 VIRTUE AS A NON-RATIONAL STATE

In seeking to understand just what kind of state moral virtue is, the majority of commentators take the natural starting point to be Aristotle's division of the virtues in accordance with the parts of the soul as set out in *NE* I 13; a chapter introduced, indeed, as addressing the question of just what virtue is (1102a5-6). The virtue we must examine, Aristotle tells us, is human virtue, and by human virtue, he adds, we mean virtue of the soul, not virtue of the body (1102a16-17). Aristotle begins with what he takes to be a familiar distinction between a part of the soul that is rational and a part that is non-rational (1102a27-28), and adds that whether these parts are to be distinguished as parts of the body are, or whether these are only two in definition, does not matter for his present purposes (1102a27-32).

Of the non-rational part Aristotle puts to one side a part that is responsible for nutrition and growth, which is possessed by all living things; this part is active even in sleep and since in sleep a good and bad person are least distinct, the activity of this part would seem to have nothing to do with determining whether a life is lived well or not (1102a32-b12).³ There is, however, a part of the soul that is non-rational but nevertheless shares in reason in a way (ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογος εἶναι, μετέχουσα μέντοι πη λόγου, 1102b13-14). This part is distinct from the rational part, since enkratic and akratic persons demonstrate that an agent may possess right reason, but have in her some other part of the soul which clashes with this reason. Nevertheless, this part still shares in reason to the extent that it is obedient to reason in the enkratic person, and listens better still to reason in the virtuous agent (1102b26-28).⁴ What this division of the soul amounts to, and

³ Lorenz suggests that "the reason for this... is that the nutritive part is not responsible for the generation of voluntary behaviour that flows from the operations of cognition and desire. (Cf. 6 12, 1144a9-11)" (2009, p.181).

⁴ This part is initially characterised as non-rational, and Aristotle reiterates after this discussion that "it seems then that the non-rational [part] has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at all, the appetitive [part] and generally desiring [part] shares in reason in a way (φαίνεται δὲ καὶ τὸ ἄλογον διττόν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ φυτικὸν οὐδαμῶς κοινωνεῖ λόγου, τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν μετέχει πως)" (1102b28-31). He continues, however, to consider "if we ought to say that this [part] also has reason, then the [part] that has reason also will have two parts. One will have reason fully, that is, in itself; the other just like listening to the reason of a father (εἰ δὲ χρὴ καὶ τοῦτο

whether it accords with other divisions made in the psychological works is of course a matter of contention, but we are told at least that the part which can listen to reason is the seat of “appetites and in general of desire (τὸ δ’ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν)” (1102b30).⁵

Having distinguished these parts of the soul, at the end of *NE* I 13 Aristotle then goes on to claim that “the virtues are divided in accordance with this difference (διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν διαφορὰν ταύτην)” (1103a3-4). The claim in the *Eudemian Ethics* is stronger still, for there Aristotle states that the moral virtues ‘belong to’ (ἔχοντος) the non-rational part of the soul (1220a10-11). For this reason, many commentators take moral virtue to be a state of the non-rational part of the soul (which can listen to reason), a state that can, as such, be characterised as non-rational itself.⁶ More specifically, since Aristotle writes in I 13 that this part of the soul is the seat of (most) desires, moral virtue is taken to be the excellent condition of a subject’s desiderative soul (*orektikon*).⁷

For a subject’s desiderative soul to be in an excellent condition, commentators then suppose, is for her desires to align with the values endorsed by reason. This alignment might be conceived of in one of two ways: on the one hand, one might suppose that the alignment requires merely that a subject’s desires (whether dispositional or occurrent) are in fact those that reason would endorse; what right reason determines to be good and what is desired are the same, and no conflict arises between the two. On this view, there need not be any implication of a causal interaction between the two; they might simply be in harmony.⁸ Alternatively, one might suppose that there is closer relation between a subject’s desires and the prescriptions of her rational faculty, such that her desires are *responsive* to these prescriptions.⁹ A good desiderative soul on this view waits for and follows the prescriptions of the rational part of the soul.

φάναι λόγον ἔχειν, διττὸν ἔσται καὶ τὸ λόγον ἔχον, τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δ’ ὡσπερ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκουστικὸν τι)” (1103a1-3). For a discussion of the rationality of the non-rational part of the soul, see Sherman (1989, p.162ff).

⁵ For a discussion of this division as contrasted with the divisions of the soul in terms of functions in *De Anima*, see Whiting (2002).

⁶ See for example Burnet (1900, p.64), Joachim (1951, p.69), Cooper (1988), Hutchinson (1986, p.12; 1995, p.213), Bostock (2002, p.35), Taylor (2006, p.xv, 106), Moss (2012, p.163-174).

⁷ See especially Burnet (1900).

⁸ Certain remarks of Grönroos might be taken to suggest this picture: “[habituation is] the process or mechanism by which the non-rational part is made to agree with reason” (2007, p.264); we can achieve virtue, he claims, because “the non-rational part can be transformed to strive for values endorsed by reason” (p.260). Cf. Kraut (2012, p.536).

⁹ Cooper, for example, writes: “virtues of character and traits of character in general (i.e., *ethe*) are qualities (*poiotetes*) (that is, relatively fixed and longlasting ways of being qualified) belonging to the non-rational part, insofar as that part is capable of following reason; in fact, these qualities require and depend essentially upon a prescriptive judgment of the reason of the person whose soul is in question” (1988, Appendix). More recently, Leunissen writes: “Together these practices [which constitute habituation] aim to change the appetitive soul-capacities of men in such

When Aristotle writes in *NE* II 1, then, that moral virtue is acquired ‘by habit’, it is thus typically supposed that what Aristotle must be referring to is a process directed towards the training of the desiderative soul, bringing it into a state either of alignment with reason, or of obedience to reason and readiness to follow its prescriptions. The project of explaining how moral virtue is acquired through habituation is conceived as the project of explaining how the desiderative soul comes to be in such a condition as to share the values of, or be obedient to, the rational part of the soul.

Hand in hand with this picture of the explanatory project goes a conception of the nature of the process by which the non-rational soul comes to be in this good condition, whereby the process too is regarded as non-rational in nature, and hence appropriate for the training of the non-rational part of the soul.¹⁰ It is worth noting, indeed, that the claim that moral virtue is a state of the non-rational soul is often appealed to in order to justify the claim that habituation is a non-rational process, and vice versa. So, for example, Moss (2011; 2012), assumes that habituation is non-rational (or ‘non-intellectual’), and takes this as evidence for the claim that virtue is itself non-intellectual: “if habituation is sufficient for virtue, virtue must be a state of the non-rational soul alone” (2012, p.217). Note that such arguments reveal a third assumption, namely that there is an isomorphism between the nature of the process and the nature of the resulting state.

Accounts of just what this process of habituation consist in and how it in fact works are varied in the details offered, but commentators tend either to emphasise the need to train a subject’s emotional dispositions through practice in correct feeling,¹¹ and/or to suppose that it will involve the training, in some sense, of a learner’s sense of pleasure and direction of this onto appropriate objects.¹² We will take note of some of these attempts at explaining the development of virtue in subsequent chapters; for now let this suffice as a sketch of the traditional picture.

a way that they become correctly disposed towards undergoing the appropriate affections and obedient to the rational part of the soul” (2015, pp.225-226). See also Hutchinson (1986)

¹⁰ Engberg-Pedersen defines habituation as “a non-rational process that results in a desiderative state (of the *orektikon*) and a non-rational cognitive state (of the faculty of perception)” (1983, p.160); Moss too claims that we become good “through the non-rational habituation of the non-rational part of the soul” (2011, p.205), and makes explicit the strong correspondence she thinks must hold between the nature of the training and the part of the soul towards which it is directed.

¹¹ See Joachim: “The passage from the indeterminate *δύναμις* (the mere capacity) to the determinate *ἔξις* is effected by *ἔθισμός* (habituation), by constantly reacting rightly to feeling in particular cases” (1951, p.72)

¹² See for example Burnet (1900, pp.68-69), Engberg-Pedersen (1983).

That the process of becoming virtuous importantly involves a subject learning to take pleasure in the appropriate objects is strongly supported by Aristotle’s discussion in II 3, though the role such learning plays and how it is achieved will remain a matter for subsequent discussion.

1.2.2 VIRTUE AS A RATIONAL OR INTELLECTUAL STATE

The above remains the dominant view of moral virtue and its development, but that is not to say it has been without detractors. Various commentators, notably within the last half century, have registered a certain dissatisfaction with the picture it presents both of moral virtue and so, as a result, of the process by which it is acquired. Such challenges are by and large motivated by the feeling that the traditional view fails to take into consideration certain distinctive features of moral virtue as it appears to be described by Aristotle, and so to be inadequate as a picture both of moral virtue and its development.

The main criticism levelled at the traditional view focuses on the picture of moral virtue it assumes, and more specifically the supposition that moral virtue is a state of the non-rational part of the soul alone. Irwin, for example, writes that:

Aristotle's allocation of the virtues of character to the non-rational part of the soul... is at least misleading. It is fair to claim that the virtues of character involve the nonrational part and the virtues of intellect do not (except for the ambiguous virtue of practical wisdom). But it would be wrong to infer that the training of the nonrational part alone produces virtues of character. It is not clear that Aristotle makes this mistaken inference. But he ought to have said that virtue of character involves both parts of the soul, virtue of intellect only one (1975, p.576).

More recently Lorenz argues that “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”, thus opposing the view that “the virtues of character are wholly constituted by excellent conditions of the part or aspect of the human soul that is not itself capable of reasoning, deliberating, thinking” (2009, p.178).¹³

Commentators who advocate this more inclusive view of moral virtue, as a state of both the non-rational and the rational part of the soul, tend to point to two broad considerations to support this contention. Some appeal to Aristotle's claim that moral virtue is a ‘prohairesis’ state (ἔξις προαιρετική) (1106b36) – a state that is ‘deciding’ – and argue that since *prohairesis* involves both reason and thought (1112a15-16), it thus involves the rational part of the soul.¹⁴ The claim

¹³ See also Sorabji (1973-4), Sherman (1989).

¹⁴ This is by no means a complete discussion of the considerations to which commentators appeal in support of the claim that the moral virtues are in part states of the rational soul or ‘belong’ also to this part. As will soon become apparent, my intention is neither to reject or not defend this claim, but to propose a different starting point which allows us to remain neutral on the question of the part of the soul to which moral virtue belongs.

that moral virtue is a prohairesis state may of course be taken merely to suggest that it is a state that makes one *capable* of making decisions, but one which need not itself involve decision and so the intellectual capacities on which decision depends. Lorenz, however, has notably argued for a stronger reading (2009, p.197-198), on which moral virtue is a state that *issues* in decision, and to that extent involves capacities of the rational part of the soul.

Alternatively, commentators may appeal to Aristotle's discussion of the intimate relation between moral virtue and the apparently intellectual virtue of *phronēsis* in Book VI. There Aristotle distinguishes between the state of natural virtue and 'strict' (κυρία) moral virtue, and famously writes that "strict virtue cannot be acquired without *phronēsis* (ἡ κυρία οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ φρονήσεως)" (1144b16-17). Later in the chapter, moreover, he discusses moral virtue's relation to correct reason (ὀρθὸς λόγος), and claims that moral virtue "is not only a state in accordance with correct reason, but a state involving correct reason (ἔστι γὰρ οὐ μόνον ἢ κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἢ μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου ἕξις ἀρετῆ ἐστίν)" (1144b26-7).¹⁵ Thus, if 'strict' moral virtue cannot be had without *phronēsis* and is a state *involving* correct reason, moral virtue cannot belong to the non-rational part of the soul alone.¹⁶

If moral virtue is a state of both the rational and non-rational parts of the soul, it is thought that in accounting for its development we need then to account not only for the development of a subject's desiderative soul, but also the development of various of her intellectual capacities, including the subject's beliefs, deliberative skill, and so on. As a result, commentators who adopt this more 'intellectualist' view of moral virtue take there to be important implications also for how we should conceive of the process by which moral virtue is brought about.

¹⁵ See Sherman (1989, p. 158); Vasiliou (1996, p.779); Cf. Moss (2012, pp.167-8).

¹⁶ Commentators who seek to defend such an account of moral virtue are of course faced with the challenge of explaining Aristotle's division of the soul and the virtues in *NE I 13*, which traditionalists have taken to indicate clearly that moral virtue is a non-rational state. The rationalist response is to suggest that to draw such a conclusion is to 'over-read' the passage: the purpose of the passage, McDowell for example suggests, "is to introduce an architectonic structure for expository purposes, and the subsequent development itself shows that we should not take the structure too rigidly" (1998, p.40); (cf. Coope, 2012, p.144 n.4). Lorenz meanwhile explains that by dividing the moral and intellectual virtues in accordance with the division of the soul:

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 virtuous of character crucially involve, and in fact are constituted by, certain good, properly habituated states of the obedient part of the soul (2009, p.193).

Hence objectors to the traditional view suppose that the division of the soul and corresponding division of the virtues in *NE I 13* is by no means decisive evidence in favour of the traditional view.

We saw that on the traditional view moral virtue, conceived of as a non-rational state, is thought to be acquired through a putatively non-rational process of habituation, which to this extent is thought to be appropriate for training the non-rational part of the soul. Indeed, traditionalists tend to suppose that whatever this process involves, it will be sufficient to bring about moral virtue. But intellectualist commentators argue that if moral virtue consists in more than a state of the non-rational, desiderative part of the soul, and involves in some way the agent's reason, it is unclear how an entirely non-rational process could be sufficient to produce this kind of state. Thus intellectualist commentators typically adopt one of two positions. Those who maintain that habituation is a non-rational process argue that, despite Aristotle's remarks in *NE* II 1, it cannot be sufficient to bring about moral virtue. Such commentators may grant, in agreement with traditionalists, that habituation is sufficient to bring the subject's *orektikon* into a good condition, but will maintain that a further intellectual process is required to develop other, more intellectual, features of virtue.¹⁷ Alternatively, commentators may take Aristotle at his word when he writes that moral virtue is produced through a process of habituation, but argue that if habituation is sufficient for the acquisition of moral virtue, it cannot be a purely non-rational process.¹⁸ Indeed, this choice is set out explicitly by Irwin, who writes that:

Aristotle's account of moral education as habituation by practice in right actions and learning to enjoy them is incomplete; for this training will produce only promising raw material that requires practical wisdom to become virtue. Either habituation is not enough, or it includes more than Aristotle mentions in Book II. If it produces the virtues of character that include wisdom, it must involve training in good deliberation, to produce wisdom; and Aristotle has not stressed this in Book II. Moral education requires a difficult transition from unreflective enjoyment of virtuous action to the wise man's understanding of the virtues and their role in happiness (1975 p.576-7).

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is worth noting that 'habituation' is treated in the literature in two ways: it can be conceived of narrowly, as a non-rational process directed at the training of the non-rational part of the soul, or more widely as a process involving both non-rational and rational or intellectual elements, and directed towards the training of both parts of the soul. Later in this chapter I will caution against assuming that when Aristotle talks about that which comes ἐξ ἔθους or of ἔθισμός he has in mind the narrow sense, and suggest that we ask instead what might be involved in the practice of virtuous actions without any prejudice about the nature of the process.

¹⁷ See Sorabji (1973-74, pp.126-129), Kraut (2012, p.539).

¹⁸ See for example Vasiliou (1996, pp.779-780).

1.2.3 A STALEMATE

Challengers to the traditional, non-rational view of moral virtue are right, I believe, to maintain that the phenomena they point to – the agent’s knowledge, her deliberated choice, her possession of right reason, and so on – are, at the very least, intimately associated with moral virtue, and that a picture of moral virtue that does not account for these phenomena seems to miss out much of what we take being a *morally virtuous person* to consist in. They are right, too, I believe, to be sceptical of accounts of the developmental process which assume from the outset what I will suggest is an overly narrow view of the nature of the process by which moral virtue is achieved (according to which habituation is a purely non-rational process, which trains only the subject’s *orektikon*).¹⁹

Yet challenges of the sort sketched above have met with resistance from defenders of the traditional view, who argue simply that the textual evidence overwhelmingly supports their view. Moss notably argues that “the interpretation on which virtue is wholly a state of the non-rational soul is so straightforward that we should only abandon it if there is clear textual evidence against it” (Moss, 2012, p.165).²⁰ She argues much the same for the process by which virtue is brought about, which she takes to be unequivocally non-rational.²¹ On this view, the phenomena to which intellectualists point are simply not within the purview of the state of moral virtue, and thus not among that which is to be accounted for in providing an account of the development of moral virtue through habituation.²²

To this extent the debate reaches a stalemate. Both sides can adduce textual evidence in support of their view of the nature of moral virtue, and I suspect that each side remains unmoved by the textual considerations adduced by the other simply because each accords more weight to

¹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that certain intellectualists are reacting against a picture of habituation which is not held by all supporters of the traditional view. Sorabji, for example, presents his view as an antidote to a picture which takes habituation to be “a mindless process sufficient for making men good” (1973-74, p.201). As we will see in Chapter 3, certain commentators have assumed such a picture in the past, but in arguing that habituation is non-rational, the traditionalist need not be committed to the view that it is non-cognitive or mindless. This view turns on a false equation of the non-rational with the non-cognitive. Habituation may, as Moss has recently argued, involve the training of non-rational cognition (2012, p.158ff).

Nevertheless, granting even that to conceive of habituation as non-rational is not necessarily to conceive of it as non-cognitive or mindless, I will argue in §1.5 below that the assumption that habituation is non-rational is not clearly warranted, and may limit our resources for explaining the learner’s development.

²⁰ She goes on to argue that the phenomena to which intellectualists point can be accommodated within the traditional view (2012, pp.166-169).

²¹ Though not, as she argues, non-cognitive, since it involves thought in the form of perception and *phantasia*, both of which are ‘cognitive’ capacities.

²² For criticism of intellectualist accounts, see also Smith (1996).

one kind of evidence over the other. For traditionalists it is irrefutable that Aristotle divides the virtues in accordance with the division of the soul, and they take it that this provides insurmountable evidence that the moral virtues are non-rational. Intellectualists or other detractors of the traditional view, meanwhile, take it that – whatever Aristotle says of the division of the soul and the virtues in *NE* I 13 and *EE* II – his subsequent discussion of moral virtue clearly reveals moral virtue to consist in far more than the good condition of an agent's non-rational desires; this, they take it, is far more important and worthy of our consideration than his brief, introductory remarks concerning the division of the virtues in accordance with the division of the soul. The positions are so entrenched it is difficult to see how one side could ever persuade the other of the need to account (only or also) for the phenomena they take to constitute moral virtue, and how these develop.

This would seem then to present a problem if we are attempting to produce an account of the development of virtue, for how do we know what must be accounted for in light of such strong disagreement? Must we simply adopt a position within this debate, and accept that proponents of the opposing view will remain unconvinced by the developmental account thus proposed? And must the developmental account assume a picture of habituation either as non-rational or rational from the outset, depending on the picture of moral virtue that has been adopted?

1.3 BECOMING A VIRTUOUS AGENT, ENGAGING IN VIRTUOUS ACTIVITY

Given the importance that attaches to the topic of moral development, but also in light of the stalemate that is easily reached within the traditional framing of the question, I suggest we can make progress by reconsidering what it is we wish to account for when producing an account of how, for Aristotle, we develop as moral beings. The approach I propose involves a shift of focus, away from thinking about how we come to acquire a certain sort of state, towards the question of how we come to be agents of certain sorts, and to engage in the kind of activity on which Aristotle insists our flourishing importantly depends. For the human good, for Aristotle, depends not simply on our being in a certain sort of state, but on the exercise of that state in action.

1.3.1 THE HUMAN GOOD AND VIRTUOUS ACTIVITY

Take, for example, the following passage from Book I, in which Aristotle makes an important proviso before embarking on his discussion of virtue. He writes, here, that it presumably makes no small difference:

whether we suppose that the best [good] consists in possessing or in using, that is, in a state or in activity. For it is possible for the state to be present, but to produce no good, such as when sleeping, or when inactive in some other way, but the same is not true of the activity; for it will necessarily act and act well. And just as in the Olympics it is not the finest and strongest who are crowned, but those who are competing – since it is only these who win – the same is true in life; among the fine and good people, only those who act correctly become winners.

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 ὑπάρχουσιν, οἷον τῷ καθεύδοντι ἢ καὶ ἄλλως πως ἐξηρηγηκότι, τὴν δ' ἐνεργείαν οὐχ οἷόν 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 (1098b31-99a7).

The aim of the *Ethics*, as we have already seen, is that we become good and achieve *eudaimonia*, and Aristotle here makes clear that this depends not simply on our possessing a certain state, but in our using it; that is, in a certain kind of activity. It is, I think, a great insight of Aristotle's that, unlike not only plants but in an important sense non-human animals too, we are by nature practical beings, and that our flourishing thus depends importantly on our perfection as agents, capable of a distinctive type of practical activity. If we take seriously Aristotle's thought that the human good depends on activity and not just the possession of a state, when we ask how we are to *become* good, we should be concerned then not simply with how we come to be in a certain sort of state, but how we can engage in the activity in which the human good consists.

As Aristotle turns from the discussion of *eudaimonia* in general in Book I to the more specific topic of moral virtue, examining what this consists in and how it is developed, it becomes clearer still that moral virtue itself is something deeply related to action and activity: it is a disposition towards feeling and action (1106b24-25); it finds its exercise in actions (1104a29b3); choice and deliberation are concerned with the practical (1111b4-1113a15) and the character sketches of *NE* III and IV make repeated references to the kinds of actions that such agents perform. Indeed, the importance of activity continues to be asserted even in the closing book of the *Ethics* when Aristotle returns to the topic of moral development in *NE* X 9. Here he reiterates the claim of the earlier books that “knowing about virtue is not sufficient, rather we must try to possess and to use it, or to become good in any other way (οὐδὲ δὴ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἰκανὸν τὸ εἰδέναί, ἀλλ' ἔχειν καὶ χρῆσθαι πειρατέον, ἢ εἴ πως ἄλλως ἀγαθοὶ γινόμεθα)” (1179b2-4) and continues again to emphasise the importance of our engaging in certain forms of activity and conducting ourselves in a certain way. He writes, for example that:

living temperately and *hardily* is not pleasant to the many, especially not the young. That is why it is necessary for upbringing and practices to have been organised by laws; for it will not be painful to them when they have become *accustomed* to them (my emphasis).

τὸ γὰρ σωφρόνως καὶ καρτερικῶς ζῆν οὐχ ἡδὺ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέοις. διὸ νόμοις δεῖ τετάχθαι τὴν τροφήν καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα: οὐκ ἔσται γὰρ λυπηρὰ συνήθη γενόμενα (1179b32-35).

Once again, the passage stresses the importance not of our being in a certain sort of state, but of our conducting ourselves in a particular sort of way. And that such conduct is what our good consists in is emphasised again some lines later when he writes that “someone who is to be good must have been finely brought up and habituated, and *then live in decent practices*, doing base things neither unwillingly nor willingly” (τὸν ἐσόμενον ἀγαθὸν τραφεῖν καλῶς δεῖ καὶ ἐθισθῆναι, εἴθ’ οὕτως ἐν ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ἐπεικέσει ζῆν καὶ μήτ’ ἄκοντα μήθ’ ἐκόντα πράττειν τὰ φαῦλα, 1180a14-17). Both passages moreover point to an important connection between our upbringing and habits, and the practices we are thus able to engage in later as a result of this.

Thus, given Aristotle’s repeated emphasis on the need to exercise virtue in action, and his recognition that our flourishing depends importantly on our activity as practical beings, it seems not only reasonable, but in many ways a pressing question, to ask not simply how we come to acquire a certain state, but how we come to be agents of the sort Aristotle describes and to engage in the activities that are exercises of virtue and on which our flourishing depends. This, I am claiming, is the question to ask in attempting to understand Aristotle on moral development.

So what does the activity of the mature virtuous agent look like?

1.3.2 THE ACTIVITY OF THE VIRTUOUS AGENT

The activity of the mature agent, and the difference between this and the activity of the learner, will be the focus of the next chapter. But it will be helpful nonetheless to give a brief sketch here of what the activity of the mature agent looks like. First, and perhaps obviously, the mature virtuous agent performs virtuous actions;²³ indeed her virtue makes her “most capable” (μάλιστα δυνάμεθα) of doing these things:

For abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and having become temperate, we are most capable of abstaining from these. It is similar with bravery; habituating ourselves to scorn frightening things and to stand firm against them, we become brave, having become brave we shall be most capable of standing firm against frightening things.

²³ We will discuss what is meant by virtuous action further in the next chapter.

ἔκ τε γὰρ τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἡδονῶν γινόμεθα σώφρονες, καὶ γενόμενοι μάλιστα δυνάμεθα ἀπέχεσθαι αὐτῶν: ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀνδρείας; ἐπιζόμενοι γὰρ καταφρονεῖν τῶν φοβερῶν καὶ ὑπομένειν αὐτὰ γινόμεθα ἀνδρεῖοι, καὶ γενόμενοι μάλιστα δυνησόμεθα ὑπομένειν τὰ φοβερά (1104a29-b3).

The actions that the virtuous agent performs accord with right reason (κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον) (1103b32), and hit what Aristotle calls in *NE* II 6 ‘the mean’. The brave person, for example:

[is one who] stands firm against and fears what he should, for the right end, in the right way and at the right time, and is likewise confident; for the brave person acts and feels according to worth and as reason prescribes.

ὁ μὲν οὖν ἂν δεῖ καὶ οὐ ἔνεκα ὑπομένων καὶ φοβούμενος, καὶ ὡς δεῖ καὶ ὅτε, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θαρρῶν, ἀνδρεῖος: κατ’ ἀξίαν γάρ, καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ λόγος, πάσχει καὶ πράττει ὁ ἀνδρεῖος (115b17-20).

To anticipate our discussion in the next chapter, however, it is not simply that the virtuous agent performs these actions, but she does so knowingly, she chooses them and chooses them for their own sake, and she acts from a stable and unchanging state (1105a31-33). We can add to this that the virtuous agent deliberates well and she is able herself to discern what is required of her by way of action in the particular situations with which she is confronted (1104a8-9). But this discernment with regards to action is not a matter of applying a principle or rule to a particular situation; the morally virtuous agent is able to read the details of particular situations correctly (1143a33-34), she sees particular details as morally salient and this perception of situations is part of what it is to be a morally virtuous agent. The virtuous agent has a developed moral perception (1142a27-30), and what is true and good appears so to her (1113a29-b1, 1176a15-19).

Aristotle’s discussions reveal that the virtuous agent is a lover of the fine (1099a13). The actions that are expressions of the virtues are fine, and she aims at the fine (1120a24). Aristotle makes explicit that the generous agent, for example, will act for the sake of the fine (τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα) in her giving and will give correctly (1120a24-25). Not only that, but she will do this with pleasure (1120a27), and the pleasure and pain that a virtuous agent takes in action is a sign of her character (see *NE* II 3). Action in accordance with virtue is pleasant, and the morally virtuous agent indeed has a proper conception of what is truly pleasant (1104b3-34; 1179b15).

Importantly, unlike the enkratic person, who abides by her reasoning and acts correctly in spite of her base appetites (1145b13-14), the virtuous agent’s non-rational appetites and spirited desires are good (1146a12), being directed towards the right objects and admitting of neither excess nor deficiency. The morally virtuous agent also experiences emotions “at the right times,

about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way” (1106b21-22); as with her actions, in feeling she hits the mean.

This then is the activity of the mature virtuous agent. It is a highly demanding picture of mature moral activity but also, I believe, an attractive one. And I submit that it is how we become agents of this sort and to engage in this activity, in this way, that we should be attempting to account for in developing an account of Aristotelian moral development.

1.3.3 A MORE NEUTRAL STARTING POINT

To put our question in this way is not to deny that there is value in investigating what kind of state moral virtue is, nor to claim that the development of virtuous agency and realisation of virtuous activity are unrelated to the question of how a virtuous state of character is acquired. Indeed, our being virtuous agents and engaging in virtuous activity depends importantly on our having correct desires, settled ways of valuing, and so forth; actions, Aristotle makes clear, flow from characters.²⁴ And to the extent, as we will discover, that virtuous agency and activity importantly depends on the agent’s choice, in asking how we develop as virtuous agents we will cover much the same ground as traditional approaches, asking for example how an agent develops the disposition to choose as a virtuous agent does. But our question demands that we keep in mind that an agent’s choices are choices with respect to action (see esp. 1105a32), and that she must not only value the right things, but be able to act well in the relevant situations in which she finds herself. Putting our question in this way takes seriously Aristotle’s central concern that we must learn to act virtuously and thus to engage in virtuous activity, a concern that is in danger of being overlooked if our focus is restricted merely to how we come to acquire a certain state.

My hope, moreover, in putting the question this way, is that we may avoid the stalemate that traditional approaches to the topic are apt to arrive at, for I suggest that the concepts of virtuous activity and agency present a less controversial starting point than does the question of what sort of state moral virtue is and what part of the soul it belongs to.²⁵ Aristotle’s discussions of virtuous activity from Book II-IV provide concrete evidence of what this consists in, and the above sketch of the activity of the virtuous agent ought to be a picture about which both traditionalists and

²⁴ For discussion of this see Lawrence (2011, p.236-7).

²⁵ To the extent that actions flow from characters, the question of what character consists in may still loom, although a traditionalist who maintains, for example, that ‘character’ refers to a subject’s desiderative and not intellectual states, could still allow that an agent must be in a certain intellectual state if she is to engage in virtuous activity, and that the development of intellectual capacities as well as desiderative capacities (if those are assumed to be distinct) needs to be explained if we are to explain how we come to engage in the relevant sort of activity.

their detractors can agree. Regardless of whether moral virtue is thought to belong only to the non-rational part of the soul or to the rational part as well, and so whether it is thought to be a non-rational or partly rational state, both groups should be able to agree that the above sketch is how Aristotle presents the activity of the mature virtuous agent.²⁶ I want now to return to the question of the process by which Aristotle claims that virtuous agency and activity are realised.

1.4 VIRTUOUS ACTIVITY IS REALISED THROUGH PRACTICE

We are trying to understand how, according to Aristotle, we become virtuous and to realise the virtuous activity on which our flourishing as moral beings depends. We saw in the Introduction that Aristotle's explanation of how this is effected is that we become virtuous through a process of habituation, which itself consists in the doing of just and temperate things (1103a17-b25). Our task, I explained, is to consider precisely what happens when a learner does these just and temperate things and how this results in the realisation of virtue.

In this chapter so far, I have encouraged a shift in focus in what we are trying to explain, away from the question of how the state of moral virtue is acquired, to the question of how we become virtuous agents and come to engage successfully in virtuous activity. Given this shift in focus, one might wonder whether we can thus begin from the same starting point, namely Aristotle's claim that moral virtue comes about through habituation and, specifically, the doing of just and temperate things. The reason one might be reticent, is that Aristotle's discussion in *NE* II 1 is phrased in terms of the acquisition of a state, rather than the realisation of an activity (see esp. 1103b21-22). Why think that the activity described in §1.3.2 is realised entirely through the practice of just and temperate things?

Now in one sense, this worry is unwarranted if it is the worry that one could possess the state but stand in need of something further if one is to engage in its corresponding activity, for to

²⁶ There may be a temptation to characterise this activity as either non-rational or rational; I take it that intellectualists or other detractors from the traditionalist view would argue that the role of knowledge and reason in this activity render it in part rational, and the activity is thus evidence that moral virtue is a rational state. I suggest, however, that it will be helpful to resist characterising virtuous agency and activity in terms of being non-rational, rational or intellectual. For whilst virtuous activity may involve the exercise of capacities of one or both parts of the soul, to characterise it as rational or non-rational may encourage a certain prejudice with regards to how we conceive of the process by which our virtuous agency is developed, a prejudice it is my intention to avoid.

That is not to say, of course, that certain kinds of processes are not more suited to the development of certain kinds of capacities. But we need not assume at the outset that what we are describing, for example, is the development of a non-rational state, and that this needs to be explained by appeal to a purely non-rational process.

possess the state of moral virtue is to have the capacity to engage in virtuous activity.²⁷ In this respect, virtuous activity can be regarded as the actuality to which the state is a potentiality.²⁸ If the state of moral virtue is acquired through the habituation process described in *NE* II 1, then so too is the capacity to engage in virtuous activity.

Indeed, as we saw in §1.3.2. above, at the end of *NE* II 2 Aristotle stresses that the actions that are the sources both of the emergence and growth of the virtues, and of their ruin, are also those in which the virtues find their exercise, informing us that when we are temperate and brave, we will be most capable of abstaining from pleasures and standing firm against frightening things (1104a29-b3). Indeed, the passage indicates not only that one who has the moral virtues is then capable of virtuous activity, but also points to the connection between being properly habituated and having practised certain sorts of actions, and being able to engage in the relevant activity.

But there is another sense in which this worry requires a little more attention. For a traditionalist might argue that the activity described in §1.3.2 is in fact a composite activity and involves the active exercise of two states: moral virtue and practical wisdom. In the case of acting justly, a traditionalist might argue that the various non-rational desires, pleasures and *pathē* that are active at the time are to be identified with the exercise of the agent's state of moral virtue, whilst the agent's knowledge of what to do in those particular circumstances, her good deliberation and so forth, are to be identified with the exercise of her practical wisdom.²⁹ And furthermore, the traditionalist may argue, it is only the former which are developed through habituation. The agent's knowledge of what to do and capacity to deliberate well must be developed in some other way. Thus, she might conclude one of two things. If we are seeking to explain how this composite activity is realised, we need to consider what other processes in addition to habituation contribute to its realisation, and cannot focus only on Aristotle's remarks

²⁷ This is setting aside the question of whether certain external goods may need to be present to enable the virtuous agent to act virtuously. So long as external factors do not *prevent* an agent from acting, she will be able to realise virtuous activity if she possesses the state of moral virtue.

²⁸ Of course, Aristotle makes clear in *NE* II 5 that virtue is a *hexis*, not a *dunamis*, but in this context he means by *dunamis* “what we have when we are said to be capable of feelings [such as anger, fear etc] – capable of being angry, for instance, or of being afraid or of feeling pity (δυνάμεις δὲ καθ’ ἃς παθητικοὶ τούτων λεγόμεθα, οἷον καθ’ ἃς δυνατοὶ ὀργισθῆναι ἢ λυπηθῆναι ἢ ἐλεῆσαι)” (1105b23-15). This does not prevent us from understanding the possession of the state of moral virtue in terms of thus having the potential to engage in virtuous activity, which is its actualisation.

²⁹ Moss comes close to making this point in §7.3 of her (2012; see especially n.40, p.169). See also Joachim (1951, p.76). Cf. Lorenz (2009, p.203).

One might respond to this by saying that the actions and activities described in Books II-IV are clearly presented as the activity of moral virtue. And thus the intellectualist might argue that the fact that such activity includes far more than an agent's having certain non-rational desires and passions only supports their contention that moral virtue is more than the good state of the agent's *orektikon*.

on habituation.³⁰ Or alternatively, if our interest is really in the development of moral virtue through habituation and the practice of virtuous actions, we need only think about how the practice of these actions moulds an agent's non-rational desires and feelings. We are back to the position outlined in §1.2.1.

Whether or not the activity of the mature agent described in §1.3.2 should be regarded as consisting in the exercise of one state or of two, there are good reasons for thinking that it is through the process of habituation, consisting in the practice of virtuous actions, that mature virtuous activity is realised. We have already seen that moral virtue is a disposition towards action and not merely towards feeling (1106b24-25), and it would be somewhat strange if by this Aristotle meant only that it is a disposition to experience certain emotions and non-rational desires, and that the other features of the virtuous agent's virtuously performed actions were not included in this 'disposition towards action'. Moreover, when Aristotle produces his character sketches in Books III-IV (prior, indeed, to the discussion of *phronēsis* in Book VI) and points to the kinds of actions and activities in which morally virtuous agents are engaged, these are clearly presented as the outcome of the process described in *NE* II 1. Nowhere does Aristotle say that the practice of virtuous actions is necessary but not sufficient for an agent to engage in such activity. The implication is rather that if an agent has been well habituated and practiced well, then she will be such as to successfully engage in these various activities.

Finally, in *NE* II 4 the topic under consideration is clearly moral virtue and what it is to act virtuously. And there Aristotle makes clear that an agent's acting virtuously consists in her knowing and choosing, as well as her being in a certain stable state. And it is through doing just and temperate things that one comes to be in this condition.³¹ Again, at no point in this passage does Aristotle write that the practice of just and temperate things is merely necessary but not

³⁰ This conclusion would then be close to the intellectualist position discussed in §1.2.2, where we saw that certain intellectualists argue that since moral virtue consists in more than a state of the non-rational part of the soul, habituation cannot be sufficient to bring it about, and it must thus be supplemented by another intellectual process.

³¹ Admittedly, when Aristotle writes that "these things come about through doing and temperate things many times (ἄπερ ἐκ τοῦ πολλάκις πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα περιγίνεται)" (1105b4-5), the 'ἄπερ' might be supposed to refer only to the second two conditions of virtuously performed action, namely the choice and stability conditions, which were the subject of the previous line. But the context of the previous line also reveals that Aristotle's intention here is to emphasise the importance of the choice and stability conditions with respect to acting virtuously (by contrast with acting skilfully), so his emphasis here on these two conditions coming about through the practice of virtuous actions need not be taken to indicate that the knowledge condition does not come about through practice.

Alternatively, one might follow Bywater and Burnet in amending the text to εἴπερ. Burnet thus takes the subject of περιγίνεται to be τὸ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχειν (1900, p.87).

sufficient to act in this way and so for the realisation of mature virtuous activity; the strong implication of the passage is rather that it is sufficient.

The clear implication of these discussions is that the activity of a mature virtuous agent, consisting in virtuously performing virtuous actions, is realised through the process of habituation and practice of virtuous actions outlined in *NE* II 1. What we do not yet know, of course, is just what is involved in the practice of virtuous actions, and how it is that such practice leads to our becoming agents of certain sorts and realising mature virtuous activity. Our task from now onwards is to consider what concretely this ‘habituation’ process amounts to, just what it is the learner does and how such a process enables her to achieve the end of virtuous agency and activity.

1.5 THE NATURE OF THE PROCESS REVISITED

In the final part of this chapter I want to address a remaining preconception that may be had, concerning the nature of the habituation process. For even if one accepts my proposed change in focus, and also agrees with the conclusion of the previous section, that virtuous agency and activity are realised through the practice of virtuous actions, one may nevertheless argue that one assumption of the traditional view is surely well-founded, namely that habituation is non-rational. And yet just as I argued that we should not foreclose the question of what is effected through the practice of virtuous actions, by assuming that all that is effected is a good state of the *orektikon*, I believe that we should not foreclose the question of the nature of this process by assuming at the outset that it is non-rational. Indeed, as I will presently show, it is by no means clear that this assumption is in fact supported by the text.

First, however, let me be clear that my worry is not, as some have implied, that to characterise the process as non-rational is thus to assume also that it is non-cognitive and thus in some sense ‘mindless’. As Moss (2012, 158ff) has recently and forcefully argued, it simply does not follow from the fact that a process is non-rational, that it is also non-cognitive, for it may involve the shaping of non-rational cognition. My worry is rather that in characterising the process as non-rational, we are in danger of excluding from our account of what happens in the course of the learner’s practice the involvement of any form of reason – on the part of the developing subject and those by whom she is guided – and with it a number of potential sources of learning.

It is certainly not implausible to suppose that part of the developmental process will involve the learner forming beliefs and reflecting on her actions and own psychological states (a reflection that can take place both in the course of her acting, but also between occasions of acting). Our

capacity for reflection may be difficult to place within Aristotle's schema of the soul and its parts, but I submit that by insisting that habituation is non-rational many commentators are led to exclude from this process a role for belief formation and reflection. Likewise, it is plausible to suppose that the habituation process could involve certain promptings, encouragements and explanations from a more developed agent in the course of a learner's practice. And yet again, the insistence that the developmental process is non-rational discourages many from attributing any role for promptings and explanations in effecting the learner's psychological development.

Given the plausibility of the thought that promptings, explanations, reflections and so on might be involved in the learner's practice of virtuous actions, I submit that in the absence of strong textual evidence to the contrary, it is desirable to leave it an open possibility that these might be included in the habituation process, at least as we begin our investigation.

1.5.1 WE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT HABITUATION IS NON-RATIONAL

But is it not simply obvious, our objector may argue, that the habituation process is non-rational? Many commentators take it to be so (see esp. Moss 2012, Curzer 2012). But it is worth noting, first, that Aristotle does not himself describe it as non-rational (*alogon*) in *NE* II 1 or thereafter. He merely contrasts what comes about from habit with what is acquired by teaching on the one hand, and what is had by nature on the other, without calling these '*logon*' or '*alogon*'.

Nevertheless, there are two pieces of evidence to which commentators have pointed to support their contention that habituation is non-rational; in the final part of this chapter I will show that these pieces of putative evidence do not in fact support this contention, with a view to beginning our investigation with a more open view of the developmental process.

1.5.1.1 'ACTION AND FEELING AS WHAT DOES THE WORK'

In support of the thought that the habituation process is non-rational, Moss points out that Aristotle's discussion not only makes no mention of an intellectual component of habituation, but "explicitly present[s] the repetition of actions and passions as what does the work" (Moss, 2012, p.171). In support of this thought, she cites both Aristotle's claim that it is "by acting as we do in terrifying situations, and accustoming ourselves to fear or to be confident some become brave, some cowardly (*πράττοντες δὲ τὰ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς καὶ ἐθιζόμενοι φοβεῖσθαι ἢ θαρρεῖν οἱ μὲν ἀνδρεῖοι οἱ δὲ δειλοί*)" (*NE* 1103b16-17), and his discussion of the involvement of pleasure and

pain in habituation (*NE* 1104b8-12; *EE* 1237a1-7). Thus, she argues, we have good reason to regard the process as non-rational.

Now, Moss is right that Aristotle's remarks in the early chapters of Book II do not make any explicit reference to there being intellectual aspects of habituation. She is right too that 'acting in dangerous situations' and 'feeling fear and confidence' are not what we would automatically consider to be 'intellectual' activities; if, at least, we take as a paradigm of intellectual activity something like engaging in argument or giving a mathematical demonstration. But whilst Aristotle's insistence that habituation consists in performing virtuous actions and experiencing appropriate feelings means that an account of how we develop as moral agents *must* have at its centre the idea that we develop by *acting* and *feeling* in certain ways, this does not tell us anything about what is involved (or not involved) in the course of practising virtuous actions and experiencing the corresponding feelings. Why should we assume that the practice of virtuous actions, at least, is something that should be regarded as 'non-rational'? By way of contrast with the paradigm of intellectual activity, I suspect that when Moss argues that 'doing the actions' cannot be intellectual, the paradigm of action she has in mind is something like running: when we become fit by running, we clearly do not think that we become fit by some rational means. But why think that virtuous action is anything like running?

Our purpose (though admittedly not Moss') is precisely to understand what the thesis that 'we become virtuous by performing virtuous actions' amounts to, and we cannot assume at the outset anything about the nature of such performance from the statement of that thesis alone. Aristotle is certainly clear that the student must herself perform the relevant actions and experience the relevant passions, but this does not in itself exclude the idea that the student's practice could involve the formation of, or appeal to, beliefs; modes of reflection; the promptings or explanations of a parent and the internalisation of these; nor indeed that the student may make moral progress *between* occasions of acting.

1.5.1.2 THE CONTRAST WITH TEACHING AND LOGOS

Even so, Moss and others argue that the way in which the concept of habituation is introduced at the start of *NE* II 1 – that is, as contrasted with teaching – gives us reason to suppose that the habituation process is non-rational, and moreover that it cannot involve any form of teaching or explanation as I have suggested it might.

Now, as I have already maintained, these two processes are not characterised as rational or non-rational in *NE II 1*, so the distinction itself does not give us reason for supposing that habituation is entirely non-rational. There is, however, a passage later in the work in which habituation is contrasted not only with teaching, but with *logos* too, implying that the habituation process should thus be regarded as *alogon*. This passage is found in *NE X 9* when Aristotle returns to the topic of moral education and having revived the distinction from *NE II 1* between teaching, habit and nature goes on to claim that:

Logos and teaching do not have power in all cases, but the soul of the listener must have been prepared beforehand by habits to rejoice and to hate in a fine way, like the ground that is to nourish the seed. For he who lives according to feeling would not even listen to *logos* turning him away nor would he understand it. How could someone living in such a state be persuaded to change? For generally it seems that passion yields not to reason but to force.

ὁ δὲ λόγος καὶ ἡ διδαχὴ μὴ ποτ' οὐκ ἐν ἅπασιν ἰσχύει, ἀλλὰ δεῖ προδιειργάσθαι τοῖς ἔθεσι τὴν τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ ψυχὴν πρὸς τὸ καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μισεῖν, ὥσπερ γῆν τὴν θρέψουσιν τὸ σπέρμα. οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσειε λόγου ἀποτρέποντος οὐδ' αὐτὸς συνείη ὁ κατὰ πάθος ζῶν: τὸν δ' οὕτως ἔχοντα πῶς οἷόν τε μεταπεῖσαι; ὅλως τ' οὐ δοκεῖ λόγῳ ὑπέικειν τὸ πάθος ἀλλὰ βία (1179b20-29).

The apparent contrast here between *logos* and teaching on the one hand, and habit on the other, Moss takes as evidence that habituation cannot involve reason or teaching; Curzer too claims on the basis of this passage that “habituation must precede ‘argument and teaching’ ...The two activities are not mingled” (2012 p.323). And yet I submit that the context of the passage does not allow us to draw such a conclusion. Let us take a look at this context.

Aristotle begins this passage by asking whether the decision to investigate happiness, virtue and other topics has reached its end, and immediately reminds us that the goal in ethics is not simply to know but to possess and exercise virtue, and become good in any way (1179a33-b4). He then reflects that if ‘*logoi*’ alone were sufficient to make people decent, their rewards would be many and great (1179b4-7). But it seems in fact that these have the power to stimulate and encourage only the well-born who truly love what is fine; they are unable to turn the many toward being fine and good (1179b7-10). He then writes that:

For the many do not obey shame but fear, and nor do they keep away from shameful things because of disgrace but because of punishments: for living by passion they pursue their proper pleasures and the sources of these, and avoid the opposing pains, having no idea of the fine and truly pleasant, having no taste of it. What *logos* could reform these? For it is impossible or not easy to change by *logos* that which has long been seized by habits.

οὐ γὰρ πεφύκασιν αἰδοῖ πειθαρχεῖν ἀλλὰ φόβῳ, οὐδ' ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν φαύλων διὰ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας: πάθει γὰρ ζῶντες τὰς οἰκείας ἡδονὰς διώκουσι καὶ δι' ὧν αὐταὶ ἔσονται,

φεύγουσι δὲ τὰς ἀντικειμένας λύπας, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἠδέος οὐδ' ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, ἄγευστοι ὄντες. τοὺς δὴ τοιοῦτους τίς ἂν λόγος μεταρρυθμίσει; οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἢ οὐ ῥάδιον τὰ ἐκ παλαιοῦ τοῖς ἦθεσι κατειλημμένα λόγῳ μεταστῆσαι (1179b11-18).

And concludes that we will be happy to achieve some share of virtue if we have what we seem to need to become decent (1179b18-20). It is at this point, then, that Aristotle returns to the question of the contributions to goodness made by nature, habit and teaching (1179b20-21) and having claimed that the contribution of nature is clearly not up to us (1179b21-23), goes on to claim that *logos* and teaching do not have power in all cases, but that the soul of the student must have been prepared by habits to enjoy and hate finely, as we saw in the passage above.

Now, what this context reveals is that in the passage quoted (1179b20-29), Aristotle is not contrasting habituation with *logos* and teaching *per se*, he is rather concerned with the fact that *logos* and teaching *alone* are not sufficient to make someone good; we need to have tasted fine things and learned to love and to hate finely if *logoi* are to be persuasive. Indeed, if we are not taught to love and hate finely, and instead live only *kata pathos*, *logoi* will certainly not have the power to transform us if our characters have already been formed in a particular way.

The passage is thus not intended to contrast habituation with teaching and *logos per se*, and thus does not support the contention that habituation is a non-rational process; it is rather intended to show that teaching and argument will be inefficacious unless a person also gains experience of the fine, which is compatible with the thought that her habituation might involve some element of *logos*.³²

1.5.1.3 PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL TEACHING

I have argued so far that the texts do not support the contention that the habituation process is *alogon*, and have claimed that it is plausible to suppose that the learner's practice of virtuous actions could be accompanied by descriptions or explanations on the part of her parents or other guides. In the absence of textual evidence to the contrary, we should leave this possibility open in developing our account. This view is shared, amongst others, by Sherman who writes that:

³² In fact, there is positive evidence in this chapter that Aristotle does envisage some role for *logoi* in the course of the child's training. First, as we saw, he does acknowledge the power of *logoi* to stimulate and encourage the well born (1179b7-10). And later in the passage, when he turns to the question of whether individuals or the community should be responsible for the moral upbringing of the young, Aristotle notes that "just as in a city, laws and characters have power, so too in the home do a father's words (λόγοι) and habits, or even more because of kinship and beneficence" (1180b3-6). The context of the discussion makes clear that Aristotle has in mind early education, rather than the later stage of education in which a student might attend his lectures, and thus that in this early stage, the *logoi* of a parent do play a role.

Aristotle would probably object to the practice of the parent who says, 'Do this, don't do that' without further descriptions or explanations. The child can legitimately ask 'why,' and some description and explanation will be in order. [...] This is included as a part of habituation (1989, 172-3).

And yet certain commentators, notably Curzer, have remained resistant to this thought, and have supposed that there is strong textual evidence to discredit this view. In response to Sherman, Curzer writes that whilst she is right to maintain that descriptions and explanations are crucial to the overall process of moral development:

there is no reason to think that Aristotle would include them within the notion of habituation. Description and explanation are teaching, and Aristotle insists that successful teaching presupposes successful habituation. He denies that descriptions and explanations should accompany parental commands and exhortations (2012, p.322).³³

The claim that Aristotle *denies* that descriptions and explanations should accompany parental commands is very strong, and not one that to my knowledge is supported by any text (nor does Curzer cite any text in support of this claim). Not only that, but there is in fact positive evidence in both *NE* II 1 and X 9 to suggest that Aristotle does grant a role for teaching in the student's practice of virtuous actions. We have already seen the evidence in *NE* X 9 that a father's habits and *logoi* have power in the development of his children (1180b3-6), but there is an even earlier indication of the need for teachers in a learner's habituation in Aristotle's analogy with skills in *NE* II 1. Having told us that we acquire the moral virtues through practice of actions in accordance with the virtues, Aristotle notes that as with skills, virtues and vices arise from the same kinds of activities. In the case of building, it is by building well that we become a good builder, and by building badly, that we become a bad builder; if this were not the case, he tells us, there would be

³³ Curzer's primary target is Burnyeat, who, having shown that for Aristotle our knowledge of virtuous actions comes about through habituation, claims that:

If the student is to have 'the *that*' for which the doctrines in Aristotle's lectures provide the explanatory '*because*', if he is to be starting out on a path which will lead to his acquiring that educated perception, the emphasis had better be on his knowing of specific actions that they are noble or just in specific circumstances. I put it as a matter of emphasis only, of degree, because often, no doubt, moral advice will come to him in fairly general terms; a spot of dialectic may be needed to bring home to the young man the limitations and imprecision of what he has learned. But even where the advice is general, this need not mean he is taught that there are certain rules of justice, say, which are to be followed as a matter of principle, without regard for the spirit of justice and the ways in which circumstances alter cases (1980, p.72).

In response to this, Curzer writes:

But this is teaching. To call it anything else would be misleading. So although Burnyeat says that he is attributing to Aristotle the view that learners acquire the *that* by habituation, Burnyeat's description of guided habituation reveals that he actually takes Aristotle's view to be that learner's acquire the *that* by habituation *plus teaching* (2012, p.322).

no need for teachers (οὐδὲν ἄν ἔδει τοῦ διδάξοντος) (1103b6-14). The case of skills, in this instance, is meant to be analogous with that of the virtues (οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἔχει (1103b13-14)), thus indicating that Aristotle does envisage some role for teaching in the course of the learner's practice of virtuous actions.³⁴

So why then does Curzer claim that Aristotle denies a role for descriptions and explanations in the learner's habituation? These, Curzer takes to fall under the category of 'teaching' and he supposes that habituation cannot include teaching, and so descriptions and explanations, on the assumption that teaching must be preceded by successful habituation (2012, p.322); if habituation is a pre-requisite for teaching, supposes Curzer, it cannot then involve teaching.

The thought that habituation must precede teaching, and therefore cannot include any form of teaching, Curzer takes to be established in two passages. One is the *NE* X 9 passage we discussed above, where Aristotle claims that we must have been taught to love finely if *logoi* are to be efficacious, the other is Aristotle's claim in *NE* I 4 that "this is why we need to have been well brought up in habits if one is to listen adequately to [lectures on] fine and just things and political things in general (διὸ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς τὸν περὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων καὶ ὅλως τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον ἰκανῶς)" (1095b4-6). But why suppose that when Aristotle claims that habituation is a prerequisite for teaching, or when he appears to contrast teaching with habituation, that he has is talking about teaching *simpliciter*, and thus implying that no form of teaching could be involved in habituation, as Curzer claims? Why not suppose that the contrast in *NE* I 4 and X 9 (and indeed at the start of II 1) is between habituation and a particular form of teaching, and likewise that good upbringing in habits is a prerequisite only for a particular kind of teaching?³⁵

³⁴ Hardie notes the significance of this passage too, and remarks further that in the *Metaphysics* flute playing is said to be acquired by habituation (1047b32): "Again, the trainer in moral virtues does not rely on habituation only, but also gives verbal instruction, the word itself being used later in the chapter (1103b12 *tou didaxontos*) in connection with moral virtue" (1968, p.100).

³⁵ Interestingly, Curzer does acknowledge that those authors who suggest that some teaching may be involved in habituation could have in mind a distinction between two sorts of teaching. Curzer takes the implicit distinction to be between "one sort of teaching [that] occurs early in the learning process and consists of telling learners which acts are right... [and a] second sort of teaching [that] occurs late in the learning process and consists of explaining why right acts are right. The former sort guides habituation; the later sort presupposes proper habits" (2012, p.323).

Moss' discussion suggests that it is a teaching of the latter sort that she has in mind when she dismisses a role for teaching in habituation. Moss presents her view as opposed to the intellectualist view that "[habituation] involves learning explanations of why certain actions and reactions are appropriate, why they are good" (2012, p.171), and this might suggest that her target is a view of teaching where the content of that teaching is explanations of *why* things are the case. As an example of an intellectualist view, Moss cites Cooper, who writes that "habituation must involve also (though Aristotle does not explain how it does so) the training of the mind. As the trainee becomes gradually used to acting in certain ways, he comes gradually to understand what he is doing and why he is doing it" (1975, p.8).

That Aristotle has in mind a particular form of teaching when he claims that habituation is a pre-requisite for teaching is supported by the contexts of the passages. I suggest that we can distinguish between what we might call ‘theoretical teaching’ and a form of teaching we might call ‘practical’.³⁶ Theoretical teaching is the kind of teaching that occurs in lectures, dealing in abstract concepts, that involves the transmission of facts outside of a practical context, whilst practical teaching is the kind involved in the teaching of a skill, and consists in *guiding* a learner, prompting her action, imparting certain concepts in the course of the learner’s practice, and so on.³⁷ And I suggest that it is the theoretical kind that Aristotle has in mind when he draws the contrast between teaching and habit in the passages cited above. Consider again the context of Aristotle’s remarks in X 9: the chapter begins with the question “if about these things and the virtues, and moreover about friendship and pleasure, enough has been said in outline, are we to suppose that we have reached our end? (ἄρ’ οὖν εἰ περί τε τούτων καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ φιλίας καὶ ἡδονῆς, ἰκανῶς εἴρηται τοῖς τύποις, τέλος ἔχειν οἰητέον τὴν προαίρεσιν;)” (1179a33-5), to which Aristotle’s response is that “in the practical realm, the end is not to theorise about each thing and to know, but rather to do them (οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς πρακτοῖς τέλος τὸ θεωρῆσαι ἕκαστα καὶ γνῶναι,

The reference to understanding in this remark of Cooper’s might suggest too that Cooper takes habituation to involve learning explanations and grasping reasons, but it is worth noting that Cooper says nothing here about the source of that understanding. Yet Moss, like Curzer, moves from this more specific target to the more general claim that no teaching of any kind is involved in habituation.

In response to the suggestion that Aristotle might have had in mind a distinction between two sorts of teaching, Curzer writes:

Aristotle does not distinguish between these two sorts of teaching. He does not mention a type of ethics teaching that is somehow exempt from the prerequisite of proper habits. He does not say that habituation must precede teaching about the *because*, but not teaching about other aspects of ethics. His claim is quite general: proper habits are a prerequisite of teaching about ethics. Unfortunately, Burnyeat’s interpretation of guided habituation makes habituation kick in during or after learners are taught which acts are virtuous. Burnyeat’s suggestion is that learners are told which acts are virtuous “in fairly general terms [with] a spot of dialectic.” And this contradicts Aristotle’s claim that successful ethics teaching presupposes both knowledge of the that and good habits. (2012 p.323).

Whether *all* teaching does indeed presuppose knowledge of the that and good habits I address directly below.

³⁶ This is not the same as the distinction between theoretical, or rather scientific, and practical subject matters, where the theoretical or scientific is concerned with universal truths, whilst the practical is to do with what can be otherwise (see e.g. 1140a33). For as Aristotle’s lectures demonstrate, there can be theoretical instruction about practical matters. My point, importantly, is that practical teaching should not be considered to be theoretical teaching with practical content, just as we recognise that for Aristotle practical reasoning is not simply theoretical reasoning with practical content.

³⁷ It’s worth noting that Curzer takes Burnyeat to attribute to Aristotle “the view that habituation *begins* with the learner being taught which acts are virtuous and which vicious” (2012, p.322, my emphasis), where the ‘element’ of teaching is prior to and independent of the learner’s habituation. But it is not clear that this is Burnyeat’s view. Phrases such as “what you may *begin* by taking on trust you can come to know for yourself” (1980, p.81) may, uncharitably, be taken to imply a certain separation and ordering of instruction and habituation, but Burnyeat’s claim that a learner needs to be *guided in their conduct* indicates rather that he takes this kind of instruction to be something simultaneous with and inseparable from the student’s practice of virtuous actions.

ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὸ πράττειν αὐτά) (1179a35-b2). The opening lines make clear that when he is talking of *logoi* here, Aristotle is talking of the subject matter of his lectures, and that when he speaks of the need to have been well brought up for these to be efficacious, he means that one needs to be well brought up in order to understand and be moved by the content of his lectures. The claim is not that any form of teaching or any explanations will be inefficacious without some prior habituation. It is rather that we cannot think that citizens will become good simply by listening to his lectures; they need instead to engage in virtuous conduct.³⁸

The same is true of the *NE* I 4 claim. It is clear that Aristotle is speaking here of the need to have been well brought up and to love fine things in order to listen to lectures on politics (τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον, 1095b5). Habituation, which imparts ‘the *that*’³⁹ is not a pre-requisite for (and so distinct from) *all* forms of teaching, but rather it seems for lectures on political science. And Aristotle would grant, I submit, that there is a distinction to be made on the one hand between the ability to listen adequately to and understand Aristotle’s lectures, which may indeed require a student to be habituated towards virtuous action, and on the other, the ability to understand the kind of guidance and explanation offered by a parent when educating a child, which does not depend on the child’s already having been habituated.

Curzer’s argument was that Aristotle regards proper habits as a pre-requisite for *all* forms of teaching about ethics, and that on these grounds we cannot suppose that habituation involves any form of teaching or explanation on the part of a guide, since good habits are necessary in order to understand such explanation. But this, I have shown, is mistaken. Aristotle not only does not claim that proper habits are a pre-requisite for *all* teaching; rather, the context of his discussion indicates that he regards good habits as a pre-requisite specifically for *lectures* on ethics, and not other more practical forms of teaching and explanation.

³⁸ That no person has any hope of becoming good without engaging in virtuous action is stressed at 1105b11-16, where Aristotle concludes his argument by stating that “it is well said that the just person becomes so by doing just things and the temperate person by doing temperate things: and no one would ever stand a chance of becoming good without doing these things (εὖ οὖν λέγεται ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ δίκαια πράττειν ὁ δίκαιος γίνεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ σώφρωνα ὁ σώφρων: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν ταῦτα οὐδεὶς ἂν οὐδὲ μελλήσειε γίνεσθαι ἀγαθός)”. The contrast he then draws with the many who “do not do these actions [but] taking refuge in arguments think that they are doing philosophy and that in this way they will become excellent people (ἀλλ’ οἱ πολλοὶ ταῦτα μὲν οὐ πράττουσιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τὸν λόγον καταφεύγοντες οἴονται φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ οὕτως ἔσεσθαι σπουδαῖοι)” clearly shows that Aristotle is strongly concerned about the *doing* (or not doing) of actions, and the impotence of arguments *in lieu* of good action to make a person good.

³⁹ By the ‘that’, Aristotle is typically thought to mean knowledge of virtuous actions. See Burnyeat (1980).

1.6 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DO JUST AND TEMPERATE THINGS?

What I have attempted to show, then, is not that habituation *must* involve teaching and *logos* – although the analogy with skills strongly indicates that Aristotle does envisage some role for teaching in habituation – but that Aristotle does not obviously conceive of the process by which we develop as virtuous agents as a wholly non-rational process, nor hold that it could not involve any sort of teaching. And for this reason, in developing our account, we should not suppose that any form of reason or teaching are excluded from the process.

What is certainly clear, however, is that Aristotle regards as the most important thing in the developmental process that the learner herself performs virtuous actions; not only do we become just by doing just things, but, as he stresses at the end of *NE* II 4, we have no hope of becoming good without doing these things. Thus whilst there may be a role for teaching or reflection in the course of the student's habituation, our account of how the student becomes a virtuous agent and capable of virtuous activity must take seriously the importance for Aristotle of her *doing* virtuous things. The question now facing us is: what is it that happens when we do these things? What is involved in the course of our doing, that eventually results in our becoming virtuous agents and to realise the virtuous activity in which our flourishing importantly consists?

2 PRACTICE AND PRAXIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Aristotle's account of our habituation into virtue is the thought that we become virtuous agents through practice of the actions in which virtue finds its expression:

The virtues we acquire by having acted first, just as we do various sorts of skills. For the things we must do having learned, we learn by doing these things: men become builders, for instance, by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just things, temperate by doing temperate things, brave by doing brave things.

τὰς δ' ἀρετὰς λαμβάνομεν ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων τεχνῶν: ἃ γὰρ δεῖ μαθόντας ποιεῖν, ταῦτα ποιῶντες μαθάνομεν, οἷον οἰκοδομοῦντες οἰκοδόμοι γίνονται καὶ καθαρίζοντες καθαρισταί: οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ' ἀνδρεία ἀνδρεῖοι (*NE* 1103a31-b2).

The question we are investigating is: what happens when we perform such actions, and how is it that in so doing we become virtuous agents and to realise the virtuous activity on which flourishing depends? To answer these questions requires, of course, that we have some conception of the kind of activity towards which this developmental process is directed, and how this is to be distinguished from the doings of a learner. It is to this issue that this chapter is addressed.

My investigation proceeds via a reading of Aristotle's noted argument in *NE* II 4, in which Aristotle raises a challenge for the account of virtue acquisition proposed in the preceding chapters of Book II. This he proceeds to defend against the imagined challenge in the rest of the passage and for this reason alone the passage is central to any understanding of Aristotle's picture of virtue acquisition. I believe, however, that the full significance of this discussion and the particular insights it offers are often overlooked. Typically, Aristotle is thought to be concerned in this chapter to defend the possibility of performing virtuous actions prior to the possession of virtue, as is required by the virtue acquisition thesis. Through close examination of Aristotle's argument in the passage, however, I will suggest instead that Aristotle's interest is closer to our own concerns: his intention, I will argue, is precisely to show what our practice of virtuous actions is directed towards, to reveal just what is distinctive about the activity of a virtuous agent, and to

indicate just why practice of virtuous actions is necessary for our becoming virtuous. The actions of a learner are revealed to be similar to those of a virtuous agent in certain important respects, but in others remain importantly distinct; nevertheless, by performing certain sorts of actions the learner can develop in such a way as to act as the virtuous agent does. As a result of reading this passage, I submit, we will have not only a better view of what it is the practice of virtuous actions is directed towards, but will also be in a better position to think about the nature of the learner's practice in subsequent chapters, and to see what this must involve if it is to be successful.

2.2 *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS II 4*

Having presented his virtue acquisition thesis as relatively straightforward in *NE II 1-3*, Aristotle interrupts his account at *II 4* and raises a challenge for his thesis that we become virtuous by doing virtuous things:

- (a) One may be puzzled about how we say that (1) people must become just by doing just things, and temperate, temperate things, for (2) (i) if they do just and temperate things, they are just and temperate already. (ii) Just as if [they do] grammatical and musical things, they are grammatical and musical

ἀπορήσειε δ' ἂν τις πῶς λέγομεν ὅτι δεῖ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντας δικαίους γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονας: εἰ γὰρ πράττουσι τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα, ἤδη εἰσὶ δίκαιοι καὶ σώφρονες, ὥσπερ εἰ τὰ γραμματικὰ καὶ τὰ μουσικὰ, γραμματικοὶ καὶ μουσικοὶ (1105a17-21).

But what, we should ask, is the nature of this puzzle and what is Aristotle's purpose in raising it? To understand the nature of the argument that follows and what it is Aristotle is seeking to establish, we need to understand the nature of the concerns that motivate him here. A certain picture of the challenge has been assumed in the literature, but with little reflection on whether this picture makes the best sense of what then follows. In the following section, I will challenge this assumption about the nature of Aristotle's concern and argue that by reading the challenge in a different way we can make better sense of the argument in the rest of the passage. First, however, we should have in view the argument that Aristotle presents.

Having raised the challenge against his virtue acquisition thesis, Aristotle's initial response is to consider whether the claim that if one does F things, one is F already is true in the case of skills, since these, he has just implied, are relevantly analogous to the virtues. He asks:

- (b) Or is it not so in the case of skills; for it is possible to do something grammatical either by chance or under the instruction of another

ἢ οὐδ' ἐπὶ τῶν τεχνῶν οὕτως ἔχει; ἐνδέχεται γὰρ γραμματικόν τι ποιῆσαι καὶ ἀπὸ τύχης καὶ ἄλλου ὑποθεμένου (a21-23).

And continues:

- (c) And so he will be grammatical, then, if he does something grammatical and grammatically: that is, in accordance with the grammar inside him

τότε οὖν ἔσται γραμματικός, ἐὰν καὶ γραμματικόν τι ποιῆσῃ καὶ γραμματικῶς: τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικὴν (a23-26).

To what extent this constitutes a solution to the puzzle, not only in the case of skills but also in the case of virtues, we will consider in what follows. Importantly, however, having initially treated virtues and skills as analogous, Aristotle then proceeds to point out an important disanalogy between the two cases:

- (d) yet the case of the skills is not like the case of the virtues, for what is produced by skill has its good in itself: and so it is sufficient that these things are produced having a certain quality

ἔτι οὐδ' ὁμοίον ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τε τῶν τεχνῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν: τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα τὸ εὖ ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς: ἀρκεῖ οὖν ταῦτά πως ἔχοντα γενέσθαι (a26-28).

- (e) but the things that are produced in accordance with the virtues are not justly or temperately done if they (simply) have a certain quality in themselves, but only if the agent acts having a certain quality

τὰ δὲ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα οὐκ ἐὰν αὐτὰ πως ἔχη, δικαίως ἢ σωφρόνως πράττεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ὁ πράττων πῶς ἔχων πράττη (a29-31).

- (f) First, if they (act) knowingly, next if they are choosing and choosing for its own sake, and third if they act from a firm and unchanging state

πρῶτον μὲν ἐὰν εἰδῶς, ἔπειτ' ἐὰν προαιρούμενος, καὶ προαιρούμενος δι' αὐτὰ, τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἐὰν καὶ βεβαίως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως ἔχων πράττη (a31-33).

- (g) with regards to the other skills, these do not count for anything, except for knowing, but with regard to the virtues, knowing is of no or of little worth, but the others are not of little significance, but of all significance

ταῦτα δὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ τὰς ἄλλας τέχνας ἔχειν οὐ συναριθμεῖται, πλὴν αὐτὸ τὸ εἰδέναι πρὸς δὲ τὸ τὰς ἀρετὰς τὸ μὲν εἰδέναι οὐδὲν ἢ μικρὸν ἰσχύει, τὰ δ' ἄλλα οὐ μικρὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ πᾶν δύναται (a31-b4).

Many discussions of this passage treat Aristotle's argument as finished by this point, but it is not in fact until (k) that Aristotle takes himself to have responded fully to the issues raised in (a), or so I will argue. First, Aristotle explains how a person comes to be in such a condition:

- (h) These (conditions) come about through doing just and temperate things many times

ἅπερ ἐκ τοῦ πολλάκις πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα περιγίνεται (b4-5).

And continues to make further claims both about the *actions* we call just (and temperate), and the just (and temperate) *person*:

- (i) and so things are called just and temperate, when they are such as the just and temperate person would do

τὰ μὲν οὖν πράγματα δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα λέγεται, ὅταν ἢ τοιαῦτα οἷα ἂν ὁ δίκαιος ἢ ὁ σώφρων πράξειεν (b5-7).

- (j) But the person who does these things is not just or temperate, but only if they act as just and temperate people act

δίκαιος δὲ καὶ σώφρων ἐστὶν οὐχ ὁ ταῦτα πράττων, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕτω πράττων ὡς οἱ δίκαιοι καὶ σώφρονες πράττουσιν (b7-9).

The result is that Aristotle can now conclude that the virtue acquisition thesis, challenged in (a), can be upheld after all:

- (k) And so it is well said that the just person becomes so by doing just things and the temperate person by doing temperate things: and no one would ever stand a chance of becoming good without doing these things

εὖ οὖν λέγεται ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ δίκαια πράττειν ὁ δίκαιος γίνεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ σώφρονα ὁ σώφρων: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν ταῦτα οὐδεὶς ἂν οὐδὲ μελλήσειε γίνεσθαι ἀγαθός (b9-12).

Let us turn our attention, then, to the original challenge posed, and ask what the challenge amounts to and why it is that Aristotle raises this against his virtue acquisition thesis.

2.3 THE CHALLENGE AND THE FORM OF THE SOLUTION

Text (a), to which I will refer as 'the challenge', comprises two main claims, which for brevity's sake I will call 'Claim 1' and 'Claim 2'. Claim 1, the claim that "people must become just by doing just things, and temperate by doing temperate things (δεῖ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντας δικαίους γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονας)" is the thesis first advanced by Aristotle in *NE II 1* (1103a34-b2) and which has formed the basis of his discussion in the preceding chapters of Book II. In these

chapters the thesis was presented as relatively straightforward, but Aristotle now signals the need for closer inspection of the thesis, acknowledging that “one might be puzzled about how we say” or “what we mean when we assert” (πῶς λέγομεν) this thesis.

Before we examine Claim 2 – the claim that “if they do just and temperate things they are just and temperate already (εἰ γὰρ πράττουσι τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα, ἤδη εἰσὶ δίκαιοι καὶ σώφρονες)” – it is worth noting that the question ‘what do we mean when we say it is necessary to do just things in order to become just?’ is a question that could be asked without the introduction of this second claim, and which may already have been on the mind of a reader of *NE* II 1-3. For whilst the virtue acquisition thesis is presented there as relatively uncontroversial, a reader may already wonder what Aristotle means by “doing just things” (τὰ δίκαια πράττοντες): how should we understand the nature of these doings prior to the possession of virtue, how are such doings related to the virtue of justice, and so on? That Aristotle pauses in his account of virtue acquisition and asks ‘πῶς λέγομεν’ of his thesis signals, I believe, recognition of the need for further clarity and precision in explaining how we become virtuous through the practice of certain actions.

But Aristotle does not simply ask ‘πῶς λέγομεν’ of the virtue acquisition thesis; rather he poses a challenge to the thesis in the form of Claim 2. Aristotle sees the thesis as not simply in need of elucidation, but as vulnerable to a particular kind of challenge. But what is the nature of this challenge and what kind of threat does it pose to the virtue acquisition thesis? Only if we understand the nature of the challenge can we understand what it is that Aristotle must show in order to defend his account of virtue acquisition.

There is of course a further claim in text (a), designed to support Claim 2, namely the claim that “if [people do] grammatical and musical things, they are grammatical and musical (εἰ τὰ γραμματικά καὶ τὰ μουσικά, γραμματικοὶ καὶ μουσικοί)”. The analogy with skills clearly plays an important role in the passage, for skills are compared and contrasted with the virtues not only in the challenge, but also in the argument that follows. Understanding the role that this analogy plays in the challenge is thus important not only for understanding the nature of the challenge and Aristotle’s motivation for asserting it, but also for understanding the way in which Aristotle’s argument subsequently proceeds.

Now certain commentators take it that Aristotle raises a challenge for his virtue acquisition thesis – whatever the challenge amounts to – *on the basis of* the supposed analogy with skills.¹ The

¹ This seems to be how Irwin and Broadie take the challenge to work: “The objector’s argument (1) rests on an alleged feature of the crafts, and hence (2) assume that virtues are analogues to the crafts in the relevant way” (Irwin

thought is that Aristotle has drawn a number of comparisons between the virtues and skills in the preceding chapters (1103a32, 1103b8-22, 1104a9-10) but he now recognises that a certain assumption concerning skills, if true in the case of the virtues too, might present a certain problem for his virtue acquisition thesis. Thus, in his response, Aristotle needs to show either that the assumption in the case of skills is false and/or that the cases of virtues and skills are not strictly analogous, and thus that there is no such problem in the case of the virtues after all.

Alternatively, one might suppose that the challenge to the virtue acquisition thesis is one that could be levelled independently of the analogy with skills, and that the analogy with skills is intended to support or illustrate the thoughts that motivate the challenge, rather than as generating the challenge as such. I believe there is more philosophical interest in reading the challenge in this way, and indeed that this reading of the challenge is supported by Aristotle's own presentation of the challenge, for the 'ὡσπερ' that introduces the analogy with skills at 1105a20 is more naturally read as bolstering or providing another example of Claim 2, rather than as *generating* the claim as such.² Nevertheless, by thinking about the case of skills alongside the case of virtues, we can surely make progress in understanding the challenge that Aristotle here poses.

2.3.1 SOME *DESIDERATA*

Whatever our interpretation of the challenge is, it should be able to meet the following *desiderata*. First, it ought to be worth entertaining as a challenge to the thesis advanced thus far; it should not be a straw man. This requires us, in particular, to understand what might lead Aristotle to assert Claim 2, for on first glance this claim appears immediately to be denied in text (b); how can we understand this claim in such a way that it is not the straw man it appears to be? Second, and relatedly, the challenge – or at least whatever leads Aristotle to assert it – must be of sufficient substance that it is not until text (k) that Aristotle takes himself to have resolved the puzzlement of (a), and to conclude that the thesis *is* well said. An interpretation of the challenge that sees it dealt with prior to (k) does not make sense of the structure of this passage. Finally, since (k) is clearly a conclusion, this clearly indicates that what precedes it is an argument, and thus statements (b)-(j) should be interpreted in such a way that they form an argument, and are

1999, p.195); “The argument weaves about in a manner not uncharacteristic of Aristotle. The first sentence, posing the problem, assumes (1) that virtues are analogous to skills; (2) that doing what is grammatical is a sufficient condition for being proficient in grammar. Aristotle responds by denying (2), which is all he needs for his main point; but then as if to be on the safe side, he takes this opportunity to argue against (1)” (Broadie 1991, p.119, n.17).

² If Aristotle wished to show that Claim 2 in the case of the virtues is *generated* because of the analogy with skills, he could have expressed this with stronger causal language.

relevant to responding to the challenge as it is posed and establishing the conclusion that the virtue acquisition thesis is well said in the face of this challenge.

2.3.2 THE ‘POSSIBILITY’ READING

The dominant reading of this passage takes Aristotle to be concerned with the possibility of performing virtuous actions prior to the possession of virtue. Irwin summarises the passage “Puzzle: how can we do right actions without being in the right state?” (1999, p.195); more recently Jimenez writes:

Concretely, Aristotle himself admits, in *NE* 2.4, 1105a17-21, that the claim that learners perform virtuous actions before having virtue gives rise to a potential objection concerning the *priority* of actions over dispositions: how can learners perform virtuous actions unless they are *already* virtuous? In other words, how can learners become virtuous by doing virtuous actions if being virtuous must be *prior* to doing virtuous actions? (2016, p.3).³

In short, Jimenez takes it that having asserted in *NE* II 1 that we become just by doing just things, Aristotle now acknowledges that one might doubt the possibility of doing such things prior to being just, on the assumption that being just is a necessary requirement on being able to do just things. If, as Jimenez puts it, “one needs to have a disposition if one is to be able to perform the activities characteristic of that disposition” (2016, p.13), it is hard to see how a learner could ever practise virtuous actions if she is not yet in the state that is a necessary requirement for performing such actions.

Commentators who interpret the challenge in this way take it that Aristotle’s solution consists in showing that it is after all possible to perform virtuous actions without being virtuous, which he does through the analogy with grammar at (b). We can easily acknowledge, in the grammatical case, that people can do grammatical things either through luck or under instruction, and so without possessing grammatical skill – showing that it is not after all necessary to be a grammarian in order to be able to do grammatical things.⁴

³ See also Ross: “How can we do good acts if we are not ourselves good?” (1949, p.194); Hardie: “We are inclined to say both (a) that we become virtuous by doing virtuous actions and (b) that, unless we are already virtuous, we cannot do virtuous actions” (1968, p.104); Williams: “Aristotle raises the question of how it can be true, as he claims it to be, that someone becomes (e.g.) just by doing just things: for how can someone do virtuous things without already having the appropriate virtue?” (1995, p.13); Vasilou: “How can repetition of like actions give rise to a particular state, if possession of that state is necessary before one can perform such actions? (2007, p.50-51), “If repetition of similar actions gives rise to a corresponding state of character, but the state of character in question is necessary in order to perform actions of the relevant type in the first place, then it is unclear how habituation can occur (2011, p.173).

⁴ Note, indeed, that we do not even need to know the conditions for being a grammarian (which we discover in (c)) to know that it does not follow from a person’s doing grammatical things that they are a grammarian.

With regards to the initial challenge in the case of the virtues, this analogy provides a solution in one of two ways. For those who take the initial challenge to be generated on the basis of the analogy with skills, the response in (b) provides a solution by showing that the assumption concerning skills (that ‘being F is necessary to do F things’) is false, thus undermining the very basis of the objection in the case of virtues. Those, meanwhile, who maintain that the challenge in the case of the virtues need not itself *rely* on the analogy with skills, nevertheless assume that since Aristotle has treated the cases as analogous thus far, that we should then “follow this same line of reasoning to attempt to solve the priority puzzle in relation to the virtues” (Jimenez, 2016, p.12). As Jimenez puts it: “we are familiar with examples of people who are not virtuous but are able to act ‘according to the virtues’—i.e. to produce outcomes that are stereotypical of the virtues” (2016, p.12), and thus we should not assume that ‘being virtuous must be prior to doing virtuous actions’.⁵ It is possible to perform the actions characteristic of a given state or disposition prior to the possession of that state or disposition, and hence, in defence of Claim 1, it is after all possible to perform virtuous actions prior to the possession of virtue.

2.3.2.1 CHALLENGES TO THE POSSIBILITY READING

The first thing worth noting with regard to this reading, is that whilst the challenge is often paraphrased in the ways quoted above, this is not in fact how Aristotle presents the challenge in text (a). The above quotations suggest Aristotle to be asking “how can we become just and temperate by performing just and temperate actions, since we *must be* just and temperate *in order to be able to perform* just action temperate actions”. But this is not what Aristotle writes. He asks rather ‘how we can say’ or ‘what we mean by saying’ that “it is necessary to do just and temperate things to become just and temperate”, given the thought that “if they do just and temperate things, they *are* just already”. No question is asked about the possibility of performing just and temperate actions, or claim made about the necessity of being just and temperate in order to perform just and temperate actions. The possibility reading is not mandated by the text.

A defender of this reading could, however, argue that the thought that it ‘is necessary to be just in order to do just things’ is an assumption that *underpins* Aristotle’s claim that “if they do just things, they are just already”. For if it is necessary to be just in order to do just things, then if a person *could* do just things, she must already be just. Thus only the person who is just already

⁵ By which she means that we should not assume that having a disposition is necessary in order to be able to perform the actions characteristic of that disposition.

could practice just things – and her practice would be redundant, since she is already just – whilst the learner who is not just would be unable to perform the actions that Aristotle has claimed we must practice in order to become just.⁶

Now, taken in isolation this is a perfectly natural reading of these lines, and plausible as the kind of assumption that would lead Aristotle to assert Claim 2. Indeed, one might argue that Aristotle is aware that certain of his previous remarks may be taken to suggest that he endorses this assumption, since the virtue acquisition thesis was introduced in the wake of a discussion of capacities (*δυνάμεις*) such as sight, and the activities these enable us to engage in. Moreover, what follows in (b) seems to fit too with this being Aristotle's concern since, as we saw, (b) can be taken to show that since it is possible to perform characteristic actions either by luck or under instruction, it is not necessary to possess a given state or disposition in order to perform its characteristic actions. But in terms of the passage as a whole, this reading is more problematic.

In violation of our first *desideratum*, the challenge appears to be something of a straw man, for if Aristotle is merely concerned about whether it is *possible or not* to perform virtuous actions prior to the possession of virtue, on the assumption that the possession of a given state is a necessary requirement of being able to perform its characteristic actions, this issue seems *immediately* to be resolved in text (b), and through a counterexample which should strike us as fairly obvious no less. Aren't we perfectly familiar with the fact that people do things characteristic of a state or disposition without possessing the corresponding state or disposition?⁷ So why did we think that possessing a given state was necessary for performing actions of a given type, and thus worry that it wouldn't be possible to perform such actions without being in the state?

Moreover, since commentators take text (b) to be sufficient to respond to this worry, it makes it difficult to understand why Aristotle continues as he does. Why, first, does he not conclude his argument here, or go on to show that the same is true of the virtues?⁸ And why, in particular, does he make claim (c), which, recall, informs us that "he will be a grammarian if he does something

⁶ In this way the challenge would be similar to Meno's paradox of learning (*Meno* 80d-e); a number of commentators see a parallel between these texts. See Stewart (1892, p.183), Irwin (1999, p.195); Broadie and Rowe (2002, p.300).

⁷ More commonly under instruction than by chance.

⁸ Cf. Jimenez, who argues that the first response from skills shouldn't be taken as Aristotle's *full* response to the challenge raised in (a) (since it is unclear in this case why Aristotle proceeds to discuss the disanalogy between skills and virtues from (d) onwards), but who grants that (b) constitutes Aristotle's *formal* solution to the puzzle (by showing that it is possible for one to perform characteristic actions without the corresponding disposition).

My argument is that to interpret even Aristotle's formal solution in the way Jimenez does, does not account for why Aristotle goes on to state *even* (c), let alone what follows.

grammatical and does it grammatically”. For this claim seems simply irrelevant if Aristotle is concerned about the possibility of performing actions prior to the possession of virtue, and wishes to expose as false the assumption that it is necessary to be in a given state in order to perform its characteristic actions. If this is the nature of the challenge, then this would appear to invite reflection on the requirements for performing certain sorts of actions: is it or is it not the case that we need to be virtuous in order to perform virtuous actions? (c), however, is about the conditions on being an agent of a certain sort, not the conditions for performing actions, and thus, it seems irrelevant to the concerns that are at play in the challenge. And yet as per our third *desideratum*, since it is not until (k) that Aristotle asserts his conclusion, we should reasonably expect that what comes before the conclusion should be relevant to addressing whatever the challenge to the virtue acquisition thesis was supposed to be, and be required in order for Aristotle to assert his conclusion that the thesis is well said.

For these reasons, I suggest we should resist seeing Claim 2 as arising from an assumption about what is required in order *to be able to perform* certain actions and the challenge in (a) as concerned with the *possibility of performing* virtuous actions prior to the acquisition of virtue. We should look instead for an alternative reading of the challenge.⁹

⁹ A somewhat different interpretation is proposed by Taylor (2006), who takes the puzzle to arise on the basis of Aristotle’s claim in II 1 that “we acquire the virtues of character by first exercising”, which he takes to entail the difficulty that “the exercise of the skill or virtue apparently supposes that one already has it, whence it is impossible that one comes to have it by exercising it” (p.81). If this, however, is the problem, then Taylor argues that the grammar example does not address the ‘crucial problem’. If the claim that we acquire skills or virtues by first having exercised them is still his problem in this chapter:

he does not solve it by distinguishing between exercising a skill and doing the things prescribed by that skill without possessing it. For the latter is not exercising the skill; hence the distinction contributes nothing to the question ‘How is it possible to acquire a skill by exercising it?’ (p.82)

Taylor considers whether Aristotle’s conception of the problem may have changed between chapters 1 and 4, such that he now wonders how it is that we can acquire a skill through the performance of unskilled acts of the type prescribed by the skill, but claims that (1) he gives no signal that his conception of the problem has changed in that way, and (2) that this latter problem is inferior to the first. On this latter point Taylor writes:

The later conception loses sight of Aristotle’s central insight that the acquisition of skills is cumulative, so that we do acquire fully mature skills via a process of development in which the exercise of those very skills at a more primitive level is progressively refined and elaborated. Even the apprentice builder builds ‘in accordance with the building skill which is in him’. The crucial point is that building skill is in the apprentice in a less developed form than that in which it is in the master (p.82-3).

In response to Taylor’s first point, it is worth noting that in the ‘problem’ posed in II 4, no reference is made to the thought that we acquire the virtues by *ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον*; the problem rather appears to lie in the idea that we become just by *τὰ δίκαια πράττοντας*. He is, however, right to draw our attention to the fact that Aristotle originally claimed that we do acquire the virtues by *ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον* and to wonder just what this claim amounts to.

2.3.3 THE 'PROCESS' READING

I believe there is an alternative account to be offered of Aristotle's concern in this passage, and specifically the thought that would lead him to assert Claim 2. I suggest that underlying this claim is a thought about the relation one might suppose to obtain between types of persons and types of actions. This relation, however, isn't the causal relation presupposed on the previous reading, according to which states play a necessary causal role in our producing certain sorts of actions; it is based on the more prosaic thought that we count as people of certain sorts in virtue of what we do. So for example, if someone does grammatical things, we call them a grammarian – and not, that is, because we think that being a grammarian is a requirement for doing grammatical things, but rather because we take 'the doing of grammatical things' to be what 'being a grammarian' consists in. Likewise, we might suppose that being a just person consists simply in doing just things. Indeed, Aristotle himself has stressed that the moral virtues find their exercise in such things. Thus we would say that if someone does just things, they are a just person.

If this is the thought that motivates the challenge to the virtue acquisition thesis, we might wonder where it originates from, and why Aristotle would be concerned that such a challenge might be raised against his virtue acquisition thesis. There are a number of possible sources for the claim. It might, on the one hand, have the status of an *endoxon*, a claim that Aristotle thinks is widely held and so would be likely to be assumed by his audience.¹⁰ No doubt we do think there is an important connection between the things we do, and the kinds of people we are, and Aristotle recognises that this might lead us to assume that someone who does things of a certain sort will thus count as a person of that sort.¹¹

¹⁰ If the claim has this endoxic status then I suggest for Aristotle this places certain requirements on the kind of response he is to give: it is a thought to be taken seriously, and even if the claim, or the conclusions to which it leads are ultimately mistaken, there may well be a truth in the claim that is worth preserving or clarifying. And this is precisely what I believe he does in his response, by disambiguating the phrase 'doing just things' (*ta dikaia prattontes*).

¹¹ I thank Joachim Aufderheide for bringing to my attention a remark in *NE* 3.5 which might seem to cast doubt on the thought that this claim has an endoxic status. Here, Aristotle writes that:

but we are responsible ourselves for having become people of this sort by living carelessly, and for being unjust or intemperate, by having acted wickedly and having been drunk and living life in that sort of way: for each activity produces a person of this sort. This is clear from those who practise from any competition or action, for they go on actually doing [these things]. Only a totally insensible person would not know that a given activity is the source of the corresponding state (ἀλλὰ τοῦ τοιοῦτους γενέσθαι αὐτοὶ αἴτιοι καὶ τοῦ ἀδίκους ἢ ἀκολάστους εἶναι, οἱ μὲν κακουργοῦντες, οἱ δὲ ἐν πότοις καὶ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις διάγοντες: αἱ γὰρ περὶ ἕκαστα ἐνέργειαι τοιοῦτους ποιοῦσιν. τοῦτο δὲ δῆλον ἐκ τῶν μελετῶντων πρὸς ἡντιοῦν ἀγωνίαν ἢ πρᾶξιν: διατελοῦσι γὰρ ἐνεργοῦντες, τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν περὶ ἕκαστα αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται, κομιδῇ ἀναισθήτου) (1114a5-14).

The fact that Aristotle acknowledges that only an insensible person could deny that a given activity is the source of the corresponding state might suggest that it cannot be an *endoxon* that all there is to being a virtuous person is performing virtuous actions. In response, however, we could take the endoxic claim to amount simply to the thought

But he might also be concerned that some of his own previous remarks could be taken to suggest this kind of picture. For Aristotle has stressed in *NE II 1* that not only are the virtues both created and destroyed through the same things, but they also find their exercise in those same things. If the exercise of virtue consists in the performance of virtuous actions, this might lead one to wonder what more there is to being virtuous and what more there could be to aim at, than simply doing these things.

Now the particular challenge that this thought would pose to the virtue acquisition thesis doesn't concern the *possibility of performing actions* prior to being just, it is rather that it makes puzzling why we would say that we need to practice doing just things; that is, why we would think there is anything like the temporally extended process of becoming virtuous by practicing virtuous actions that Aristotle has claimed there is in the previous chapters.¹² For if being just consists simply in doing just things, then if someone does such things, she counts as just already; there is nothing more that needs to happen. On this reading, then, when Aristotle writes that "they are just already (ἤδη εἰσι δίκαιοι)", the 'ἤδη' is intended to signal not that the agent is just *prior to* performing those just actions, but rather to signal that one is *thereby* just. In so far as one 'becomes' just by doing just actions, it is something that is *immediate*; if one performs a just action one is immediately just.¹³

Not only does it make little sense to say that there could be any temporally extended process of becoming just by doing just actions of the sort Aristotle has alluded to, but the relation between types of persons and types of actions that is assumed on this reading (according to which being a person of a certain sort consists simply in the performance of certain characteristic things) also makes it difficult to see what there could be to aim at over and above our doing these just things

that there is an intimate relation between the types of people we are, and what we do, or that we are who we are in virtue of what we do (not yet articulated as the claim that if we do F we are F already) – a claim that, indeed, is supported by just this passage. Aristotle recognises, however, that if we do not reflect on this claim, and distinguish between the mere doing of a deed and the doing of it in a certain way, one might be led to suppose that the connection between who we are and what we do concerns merely our deeds.

¹² He has notably insisted on the importance of beginning this process from the earliest moments of childhood, as Plato did too (1104b12-13).

¹³ This reading of ἤδη is briefly canvassed, but not adopted, by Lawrence (2011, p.265), who writes: For simplicity I assume 'ēde' is a temporal 'already'; if we understood it as 'thereby' this would allow the possibility also of a reductive puzzle: that all there is to a skill/capacity or disposition is the doing of an act (see the Megarian claims of *Meta.* 9.3). The possibility that by doing a single V or T act one might acquire the skill or disposition would be a limiting case of Aristotle's position: one would not be exhibiting one's skill or disposition in that single performance, but acquiring it. (Perhaps this might be possible for example in learning to ride a bicycle, but not intelligible with the kind of skills and dispositions Aristotle is here concerned with) (2011, p.265).

if our aim is to be a just person. If we are just in virtue of doing just things, what further thing could the learner have to aim at beyond doing these just things – isn't it *enough* that she is doing them?

To try to make the contrast between this and the possibility reading of the challenge perspicuous then: the possibility reading takes Aristotle to be concerned about whether *we can perform virtuous actions before being virtuous*, a concern that is generated by the thought that being in a state is necessary in order to be able to perform actions of certain sorts. It invites reflection on the requirements for performing actions of certain sorts, and takes him to respond by showing that the possession of a state isn't necessary in order to be able to perform such actions, and that it *is* therefore possible to perform the actions *before* being in the state. My reading, meanwhile, sees Aristotle as keen to defend the thought that we *become* just by doing just things, that there is a temporally extended *process* of becoming virtuous and something *to aim at* over and above performing the actions that must be performed according to the virtue acquisition thesis. It is a picture that would make little sense if we thought that being a just person consists simply in doing just things.

I propose, then, that what follows is not a demonstration of the possibility of performing certain actions prior to the possession of virtue – this I'm suggesting was never at issue – but rather an investigation into the relation that holds between the kinds of persons we are and what it is that we do, an investigation that will require us to be much more precise in how we think about action, and in particular to unpack the somewhat ambiguous phrase used so far - 'doing just things' (τὰ δίκαια πράττοντας).

2.3.3.1 THE SOLUTION: DISAMBIGUATING 'τὰ δίκαια πράττοντες'

Aristotle's response to the challenge begins with the case of skills, and through this he sets up the distinctions he will employ in the case of the virtue. As we will see though, there are certain important qualifications which have to be made before the original worry about becoming *virtuous* can be fully dealt with.

In texts (b) and (c) Aristotle introduces an important distinction between (simply) 'doing something grammatical' (γραμματικόν τι ποιῆσαι) and doing that thing 'grammatically' (γραμματικῶς). We see here much more precision in Aristotle's treatment of action, for we are no longer talking simply of 'doing grammatical things', but rather of 'doing something grammatical',

of the thing that is done, and ‘acting grammatically’, the way in which it is done.¹⁴ In particular I suggest that his move to the *singular* here – to the ‘*something* grammatical’ (γραμματικόν τι) away from the plural ‘grammatical things’ (τὰ γραμματικά) – is a clear sign that that some disambiguation is underway. It indicates that Aristotle is here talking about a concrete doing, rather than a way of behaving.¹⁵

What does this disambiguation allow Aristotle to show? It allows him to show first that there are two ways in which we can think about action. We can think of action in terms simply of the thing that is done. But we can also think about action in a way that includes *the way* that that thing is done, which, as we will see, refers to features of the agent. And this in turn allows him to respond to the challenge as follows.

Taking just the case of skills for now, he can show through the example in (b) that if we think about ‘doing grammatical things’ in terms simply of the thing done, then we shouldn’t think that if someone does such things, that she is thereby a grammarian. For we would not want to call either the chance doer or the student grammarians; indeed, Aristotle appears to contrast these two subjects with the grammarian in the next line. If we apply the same reasoning to the case of the virtues, we can see too that it does not follow from a person’s simply doing just things that she is a just person. Thus Claim 2 and the challenge it poses to the virtue acquisition thesis are undermined: if one does just things, one is not just already.

It might look as though this interpretation is therefore vulnerable to the same straw man objection as before. Yet unlike the possibility reading, which took Claim 2 and the assumption that gave rise to it to be *immediately* undermined, here Aristotle’s solution requires him to disambiguate the ways in which we might think of action, and to show that on one sense of action, the conclusion that ‘one is just already’ does not follow. Moreover, we see Aristotle engaging with the thoughts that gave rise to the challenge, and showing that there is nevertheless a certain truth to the motivating assumption that there is an important connection between the what we do and the kinds of people we are. For in text (c) he shows that the grammarian *is* someone who does

¹⁴ In fact, Aristotle’s treatment of action becomes more precise still, for notice the introduction of the verb ποιέω when talking about skills. In (a), no verb is given when talking of doing ‘τὰ γραμματικά’, and we are presumably required to supply the ‘πράττουσι’ of the line before. Moreover, its introduction here may already anticipate the difference between ποιήσις and πράξις which he explicitly addresses later in the *Ethics*, and may already be present in the disanalogy between virtues and skills (in particular, in the condition that virtuous actions are performed by a virtuous agent for their own sake).

¹⁵ It might also signal a recognition on his part that we don’t in fact think that people *repeatedly* do grammatical things by *chance*, but that such doings are just one offs.

grammatical things, but it turns out not in any old way: she does them grammatically. The important connection between the kinds of persons we are and what we do doesn't concern action understood in terms simply of the thing done, but rather action understood as incorporating both the thing done and the way in which it is done.¹⁶

Turning to the original challenge, if we put this in terms of becoming grammatical for now, we should see that it turns out to be perfectly fine to think that there is a process of becoming grammatical through doing grammatical things: a learner does grammatical things, considered in terms of the thing done, and becomes over time such as to do those things grammatically. There is something to aim at over and above her doing grammatical things, and that is to do them grammatically. But Aristotle does not yet draw such a conclusion in the case of virtue; rather he points to a certain disanalogy between the cases of virtues and skills. We need then to understand what the disanalogy is between skills and virtues, and what role this plays in Aristotle's response to the original puzzle about virtue acquisition.

2.4 THE DISANALOGY

For those who adopt the possibility reading and take the first response from skills to be a sufficient response to the original challenge, the introduction of the disanalogy at (d) presents a particular interpretive challenge. Broadie and Irwin – who take the challenge to be resolved by (b), since it shows the assumption about skills that was thought to be the *basis* of the challenge in fact to be false – suppose that Aristotle introduces the disanalogy 'as if to be on the safe side'; to show, that is, that since the virtues are not analogous to skills, that we are not justified in drawing conclusions about the virtues from assumptions about skills in the first place.

But even for those who do not take Aristotle to have yet sufficiently responded to the challenge as it concerns *virtue* acquisition, the disanalogy still presents an interpretive challenge, for it is by no means clear what the precise content of the disanalogy is. The main source of difficulty lies in understanding Aristotle's first claim in the disanalogy concerning skills. He writes in (d) that "the things that come about from skill have their 'good' in themselves, and so it is sufficient that they are produced having a certain quality (τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα τὸ εἶ ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς; ἀρκεῖ οὖν ταῦτά πως ἔχοντα γενέσθαι)" (1105a26-28). But what, we should ask,

¹⁶ Unlike the possibility reading, then, this reading can make sense of what Aristotle writes in (c) with its focus on the grammarian and the way in which they behave, which seemed irrelevant if his concern was with the possibility of performing actions prior to the possession of virtue.

does he mean by ‘the things that come about’ (τὰ γινόμενα), and what is their having a certain quality sufficient (ἄρκεῖ) for?

2.4.1 A CHANGE OF SUBJECT

Many commentators, and in particular those who maintain that the original challenge has been sufficiently responded to in the first response concerning skills, take the disanalogy to involve, in effect, a change of subject. Most take it that by ‘the things that come about’ (τὰ γινόμενα) Aristotle means to refer to the characteristic products of skill, which as Broadie rightly points out could include either physically independent products such as houses or shoes, or *non*-physically independent products such as musical performances.¹⁷ But what these being of a certain quality is sufficient for, and what the disanalogy thus amounts to, remains controversial.

2.4.1.1 WHAT IT IS FOR AN AGENT TO HAVE DONE WELL (BROADIE)

Broadie argues that what Aristotle *can't* be claiming is that “the product’s being in the right condition is sufficient evidence of skill in the (immediate) producer”, since she takes Aristotle to have told us at (b) that “the product could be correct through chance or someone’s instruction” (1991, p.83).¹⁸ If it is the case that a product could be of a good quality but produced by a non-skilled agent, then a product’s being of a good quality couldn’t be a sufficient indication of skill. Broadie assumes, then, that Aristotle’s claim in (d) is rather:

that we are satisfied with things which are normally produced by someone without skill. If we assess what such a doer has done by *what he has made*, we can say that what he has done is good. The lack of skill implies no defect in what he has done on this occasion, and it might reasonably be claimed that the skill is of value only because whoever possesses it is more likely to produce acceptable articles (1991, p.83).

In the case of the virtues, however, to say that an agent has done well it is not enough that they have performed an action of a certain physical quality; only an agent who performs the act fulfilling the three conditions can be considered to have done well.

¹⁷ Given that Aristotle’s first analogy with skills in (a) drew on the example of musical skill, as well as grammar, the claim in the disanalogy should then be able to cover such cases.

¹⁸ This isn’t strictly speaking true, however. Aristotle does not say anything at (b) about the quality of what’s done. He says that one could produce something grammatical by chance etc., but says nothing in particular of whether this is of the same quality as that produced by a grammarian.

2.4.1.2 THE VALUE OF ACTING FROM SKILL VS. ACTING FROM VIRTUE (IRWIN)

Irwin, meanwhile, takes Aristotle in the disanalogy to be restricting his claim to cases in which a product is produced by a skilled agent – presumably on account of the agential $\upsilon\pi\omicron$ in line 27 – and not products produced by any person. Thus the claim in (d) need not be seen to be in conflict with (b). But the disanalogy still involves a change of topic on Irwin’s reading, and concerns the value of acting from skill compared with the value of acting from virtue (alluded to by Broadie also). For Irwin, Aristotle’s point is that “the goodness and badness of production is determined by its usefulness for producing the product; a better method of production is better at producing the right sort of product” (1999, p.195). Irwin’s thought, I take it, is that possessing skill, rather than acting by chance, is simply a more reliable method for producing good products, and this is why skill is a more valuable method of production than chance. But its value comes from its effectiveness at (consistently) producing good products. In the case of the virtues, however, “virtuous action is not valuable simply as a means to some further result (e.g. acting kindly is not simply a means to making someone feel better)” (1999, p.196), but rather has intrinsic value.

2.4.1.3 THE ‘HOW’ OF HABITUATION (JIMENEZ)

More recently still, a quite different interpretation of the disanalogy and its role in the passage has been proposed by Jimenez. Jimenez, who endorses the possibility reading of the original challenge takes (b) to constitute Aristotle’s ‘formal’ solution to the puzzle, but argues that we should resist seeing this as his ‘full’ response. A full response, she argues, would require Aristotle to show “*how* the process of learning by doing works, that is, how practice contributes to the formation of the corresponding dispositions” (2016, p.14). Text (b) showed that practice is possible, but not how it works, and thus Jimenez suggest that the disanalogy is intended to provide the materials for making progress towards an account of learning by doing, by “underlining a difference in the requirements that we should take into account when learning virtue” (2016, p.15).

On her view, the claim in the disanalogy is that:

things have ‘goodness’ ($\tau\omicron$ $\epsilon\upsilon$) simply when they are done ‘by the crafts’ ($\upsilon\pi\omicron$ $\tau\omicron\omega\upsilon$ $\tau\epsilon\chi\upsilon\omega\upsilon$), independently of the actual characteristics of the agent, while in the case of the virtues, e.g. justice or temperance, the focus shifts to the agent: how he acts and whether he himself fulfils certain conditions (2016, p.16).

The point of the disanalogy, Jimenez argues, is to show the different requirements for learning a skill and learning a virtue. When learning a skill, she argues, “agents should pay attention in their

practices to features of the product and make them correspond to the rules of the corresponding craft” (2016, p.17), but in the case of the virtues, “agents not only must be aware of the appropriateness of their outcomes to the given situations, but they also must *themselves* be in a certain condition when they perform those actions” (2016, p.17).

2.4.1.4 CRITICISM

With regards to each of these readings, my purpose isn't to dispute whether Aristotle would or would not *endorse* the claims advanced in each (whether, that is, these are 'Aristotelian' theses).¹⁹ The issue, rather, is that these readings fail to take into account *the terms of the disanalogy*, and in particular what Aristotle says here with regard to the virtues. For in (e) Aristotle does not say that “with the virtues, it is not the case that an agent has *done well* if the agent is not in a certain condition” as we would expect on Broadie's reading, nor that “it is not the case that the goodness of virtuous action lies in its results” as we would on Irwin's.²⁰ Rather, he tells us that “the things that are produced in accordance with the virtues are not *justly* (δικαιῶς) or *temperately* (σωφρόνως) *done*, if they (we might supply - 'simply') have a certain quality in themselves” (1105a28-30).²¹

¹⁹We will look more closely at Jimenez' claims about the requirement for becoming virtuous in the next chapter, where we will consider whether and to what extent it is necessary given the conditions stipulated in (h) for a learner to *themselves be in a certain condition* when they *practise* virtuous actions. With regards to Irwin's interpretation, meanwhile, I suggest that it is less than obvious that Aristotle would wish to claim that the value of skill lies only in its effectiveness in producing products of certain sorts, as Irwin implies.

With regards to Jimenez' interpretation of the intended role of the disanalogy in this passage, however, it is unclear that Aristotle's intention in presenting the disanalogy to point to an explanation of how learning by doing works. Jimenez is of course right that (b) does not provide any insight into the issue of *how* we learn by doing, and may be right too in thinking that this is something Aristotle himself would grant. She may be right, furthermore, that from Aristotle's remarks in this passage we can glean some information as to how he may conceive of this process as working. But this does not mean that we should interpret the argument of II 4 itself in this way. For the question of how we do in fact learn by doing is not the question that Aristotle asked in (a); he asked how it is that we *say* we become just by doing just actions, and this invites us to show how the thesis can be maintained and/or what concretely the claim amounts to (what it is, say, that we mean by saying 'we become just by doing just things'). It is a further issue to ask *how this in fact works*. Thus I suggest we should look for an interpretation of the disanalogy that makes the argument fit with what has so far been stated.

²⁰ Jimenez recognises that (e) concerns the conditions for acting virtuously, although it is unclear from the remark of hers quoted above (§2.4.1.3) that she recognises that the contrast being drawn is between the conditions for acting virtuously and grammatically. As above, there is certainly no explicit mention in the disanalogy of what one needs to do in the course of one's practice, as her reading requires.

²¹ Jimenez takes this to be equivalent to claiming that they are well performed, writing “he contrasts this with the requirements for the stereotypical outcomes or results of actions to be well (or 'justly' or 'temperately' and, in general, virtuously) performed” (2016, p.16). Again, it may well be the case that Aristotle takes acting 'justly' to be equivalent to acting 'well', but in trying to understand the content of the disanalogy, we should take seriously the terms in which it is stated.

2.4.2 A CONTINUATION OF THE ARGUMENT: THE TRUTH CONDITIONS OF THE ADVERBS

The presence of these adverbs in text (e) strongly indicates that the contrast Aristotle is pointing to concerns what it is to do something *skilfully* on the one hand, and *virtuously* on the other, and so that Aristotle is not changing the subject, but continuing with the point made at (c) where he introduced the adverb ‘grammatically’. The claim in (d) is a claim then, it seems, about what it is to act skilfully; but if this is the case, do we not then find ourselves faced with the problem flagged by Broadie, that this would seem to conflict with the claims in (b) and (c), in which Aristotle says that a non-skilled agent can do something grammatical, an agent, that is, who doesn’t act *grammatically*? How could the quality of *what comes about* be an indication of it’s being skilfully done if something of the appropriate quality could be produced by someone not acting skilfully?

In order to deal with this concern, it is important to recognise that Broadie is specifically concerned with the thought that the quality of a product could count as *evidence* of skill in the producer (or, in the strict terms of the disanalogy, of its being skilfully produced). The concern is that if good products can be produced by both skilled and non-skilled agents, the quality of a product surely can offer no evidence for the presence of skill. But why should we think that Aristotle is concerned in this passage with *evidence*? The original puzzle is not an epistemic puzzle, about whether we can tell if agents are just or not on the basis of their action, and nor should we think in the disanalogy that Aristotle is concerned with whether we can tell if actions have been skilfully or virtuously performed. He is offering an *analysis* of skilfully and virtuously performed actions, and telling us what each way of acting in fact involves.

Thus I propose that we can read the disanalogy as follows: Acting skilfully depends on the presence of knowledge in the agent, and consists in producing things of a certain quality. It is entirely a matter of producing things, albeit with a certain causal origin in the agent. But acting virtuously is not simply a matter of producing certain outcomes or performing certain kinds of action. It is, importantly, a matter not only of acting from knowledge, but of the agent’s motivation and a certain stability of character.

Note that this way of reading the disanalogy provides a way of responding to a concern raised by Vasiliou (attributed to Barney):

One might be puzzled, however, about whether there really is a disanalogy between virtue and craft as Aristotle claims. After all, there is a “two-level” evaluation at work in each case: there is the evaluation of what was done and there is the evaluation of how it was done – was it done as the virtuous or craftsman would do it? So where is the disanalogy? (2011, p.175).

My argument is that there is an evaluation of what's done and how it was done in each case, but that the disanalogy concerns the different truth conditions of the latter in the case of the virtues and the skills.

It is because the truth conditions for virtuously and skilfully performed action are different that Aristotle could not conclude his argument at (c). For there he told us that an agent will be a grammarian if they do something grammatical and do it grammatically, which is to do it in accordance with the grammatical knowledge in them. But if we were invited to draw the same conclusion in the case of virtue, we would be misled into thinking that acting virtuously is also simply a matter of acting in accordance with some knowledge inside oneself (as opposed to by chance or under instruction), and to think that all that needs to be developed over the course of habituation is knowledge of virtuous action. But as the disanalogy makes clear, acting virtuously consists in far more than this, and there is more to aim at in our development simply than the acquisition of some body of knowledge.

2.4.3 THE FULL SOLUTION

It is thus with the important difference between the adverbial modifications of skilled action on the one hand, and virtuous action on the other now in place, that Aristotle can turn his attention again to the original worry about virtue and the underlying thoughts that first gave rise to this.

The return is signalled, I submit, in (h) by a return to the 'τὰ δίκαια' language of *NE II I* and the original challenge in (a), (away, that is, from the 'τὰ δὲ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα' locution of (e)). We are told that a learner comes to meet the agential conditions on virtuously performed action by doing just and temperate things many times (h), and that the things we call just and temperate are those that a just and temperate person would do (i). Importantly, however, the person who 'simply' does just things is not just, she is just only if she acts *as* just people act (j). This claim, then, is the counterpart of claim (c) about skills, and makes clear that the important connection between doing just things and being a just agent concerns not simply what one does, but the way that one acts. Not only does this show, in response to the original challenge, that one who simply does just and temperate things cannot yet be considered just and temperate, but it allows Aristotle to show that there is indeed something to aim at in our moral lives over and above simply performing just and temperate actions, and that is to become such as to act knowingly, to choose these actions for their own sake and to do so from a firm and unchanging state.

Our coming to act in this way, however, is not something that can come about without our having continually performed virtuous actions over a long period of time: “And so it is well said that the just person becomes so by doing just things and the temperate person by doing temperate things: and no one would ever stand a chance of becoming good without doing these things (εὖ οὖν λέγεται ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ δίκαια πράττειν ὁ δίκαιος γίνεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ σώφρονα ὁ σώφρων: ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν ταῦτα οὐδεὶς ἄν οὐδὲ μελλήσῃε γίνεσθαι ἀγαθός)” (1105b9-12). Indeed, that the agential conditions on virtuously performed action are still conditions with respect to action – for her knowledge and choice certainly concern action – already indicates why a learner must have some experience of virtuous action if she is to gain knowledge of this and come to choose it for its own sake.²²

2.5 PRACTICE AND PRAXIS

We have now a complete reading of Aristotle’s argument in *NE* II 4, and I want in the last part of this chapter to reflect on what Aristotle has showed through the course of this argument, and what this reveals for the purposes of our project.

In the course of the argument of *NE* II 4 we have seen there is a distinction to be drawn between (simply) performing virtuous actions, and ‘acting virtuously’, which involves performing such actions knowingly, choosing them for their own sake, and doing so from a stable state. The latter constitutes the activity of the mature virtuous agent. Aristotle’s account of virtuously performed action reveals the virtuous agent to be the author of her action in a very strict sense. An author in this strict sense, it transpires, is not merely one who acts intentionally, nor is it even one who acts knowingly – although both of these are conditions on authorship.²³ Rather, for an agent to be an author in this strict sense is for her action to reflect her firmly held values, and to issue from something fixed and stable. As Lawrence puts it:

²² We will investigate the importance of a learner doing these things herself in Chapters 5 & 6, in particular.

²³ Only the knowledge condition is explicitly pointed to by Aristotle in *NE* II 4, but Aristotle’s discussion in Book III reveals that the action of the virtuous agent must be *hekousion*, that is ‘voluntary’, or as Charles (1984, p.62) prefers, ‘intentional’. *Hekousion* action is defined, in part, as action which has its principle in the agent himself, knowing the particulars that constitute the action (τὸ ἐκούσιον δόξειεν ἄν εἶναι οὐ ἢ ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰδῶσι τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα ἐν οἷς ἢ πράξις, 1111a22-24). We might reasonably suppose that at 1105a31 that the knowing condition of virtuously performed action is stronger than the knowledge ‘of particulars’ required for intentional action, and requires perhaps that the agent know that her action is what virtue demands in a situation, rather than particulars like “who is doing it, what he is doing, about what or to what he is doing it; sometimes also what he is doing it with – e.g. with what instrument, for the sake of what, e.g., safety; in what way, for example, gently or hard (τίνα καὶ πόσα ἐστὶ, τίς τε δὴ καὶ τί καὶ περὶ τί ἢ ἐν τίνι πράττει, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ τίνι, οἷον ὀργάνῳ, καὶ ἔνεκα τίνος, οἷον σωτηρίας, καὶ πῶς, οἷον ἡρέμα ἢ σφόδρα)” (1111a3-6).

Praxis is then action that agents stand four-square behind, seeing it as truly theirs – as expressing their selves, their values, their character – as being the fine way to go on, as making a life worth the living. For Aristotle it is this specifically human activity – the humaning that is the realisation of their essence – the form of life and life-activity that constitutes the function of the adult, or mature perfection of its nature (*tetelesmenon*) (1.7 1098a3-5) (2011, p.235).

So a virtuous agent, as a strict author of her actions, does not simply identify what is called for in a situation in a disinterested way; it is not that she recognises, whether on the basis of some authority or through some process of deduction, that some course of action is the one that she ought to take. Rather, it seems that the virtuous agent sees what is called for in any given situation, because certain features of the situation are salient to her and strike her as what *matters about* the situation;²⁴ indeed, these things matter *to* her. The virtuous agent's chosen action constitutes her own response to the objective moral features of the situation. It is at once a highly demanding, but also deeply attractive picture of authorship, which takes into account that we are not only knowing beings, but desiring beings as well. This form of action is the perfection of our (practical) nature, and that towards which the learner's practice of just and temperate actions is aimed.

By contrast with the virtuous agent and the *praxis* in which she is engaged, the learner performs just and temperate actions, but she does not yet act virtuously. For Aristotle asserts that one who does virtuous things virtuously is virtuous; if he claimed that a student of virtue acts in this way also, Aristotle would invite the charge that the learner is thereby virtuous and that there is nothing for her to aim at in her practice. We will reflect further on this thought in the following chapter, but for the present let us simply acknowledge that the argument of II 4 forces us to see the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent as distinct in just this way.²⁵

We might want to reflect a little further on the 'virtuous actions' that both the student of virtue and the virtuous agent perform. I have spoken so far of 'the thing done' or the 'deed', and contrasted this with thinking about 'the way that thing is done'; we have seen that 'the way a thing is done' involves psychological facts about the agent, such as her knowledge, choice and state of

²⁴ For a discussion of 'salience' in this sense, see both Wiggins (1978-79) and McDowell (1998).

²⁵ Importantly, beyond the thought that a student of virtue performs just and temperate actions, but does not yet perform those actions justly and temperately, we do not know much of the learner's action. How we should conceive of the learner's not virtuously performed action will be the focus of the following chapter, but to anticipate the discussion there, let it be noted that nothing from the claim that a learner does not act virtuously entails that all she does is *merely* perform virtuous actions nor to suggest that her action is to be conceived of in any way like that of the chance actor.

character (which we might take to include her various desires, perceptions, pleasures and pains, and so on), but how should we conceive of the ‘things done’, the ‘virtuous actions’ themselves?

There are at least two considerations that are relevant to how we go about characterising these actions. First, our characterisation must allow that they can be performed by a variety of agents, acting both virtuously and not. Certainly they need to be performable both by a virtuous agent and a learner, and presumably an enkratic agent too, who performs the right actions, but fails to act as the virtuous agent does, in so far as her appetites are bad (1145b13) and she presumably does not choose these for their own sake.²⁶ So our characterisation of the actions must allow that they can be performed by agents with a variety of psychological states, and should not include as part of the description of the action that, for example, they are chosen for their own sakes.

The second important consideration is that these actions must have a certain value, independently of their performance by a virtuous agent. That this must be so might strike us as less clear, since one might suppose that the disanalogy between the virtues and crafts has revealed that whilst in the case of skills ‘τὸ εὔ’ is found in the product of skill, in the case of the virtues the quality of the thing done or produced is not as important as its being done in a certain way. But recall that the disanalogy concerned not the value of the respective forms of action *per se*, but rather the conditions on acting skilfully vs. virtuously; an agent may not be engaged in *eupraxia* unless she acts virtuously, but that is not to say that there is no value in the actions she performs if she does not yet act virtuously. More to the point, the reason for supposing that these actions must themselves have some value is that the virtuous agent chooses these *for their own sake*; there must then be some value to the thing done, independently of the way it is done, that makes it something worth choosing for its own sake.²⁷

In order to identify a virtuous action, independently of the virtuous agent’s manner of acting, we might be tempted to characterise the former in terms of the external or physical element of what the virtuous agent does, as contrasted with her inner psychological states. But here some

²⁶ What is less clear is whether we should allow or disallow that such actions could be performed by chance. Depending on whether Aristotle would allow that such actions could be performed by chance or not will determine whether we should characterise them in such a way that they could be performed unintentionally, as involuntary actions described in Book III are, or whether we should characterise them as intentional actions, thus including certain psychological states of the agent within the description of the action (in accordance with Aristotle’s analysis of voluntary actions in Book III; for discussion, see Charles, 1984, Ch.2). Aristotle’s grammar example reveals that an agent can do something grammatical by chance, but it is unclear whether he holds that this is true for the case of virtuous actions. It might indeed be seen as conspicuous that Aristotle does not repeat the claim that one could do something virtuous by chance (although we should presumably allow that one could do something virtuous under instruction, since this is the way in which most agents learn to act).

²⁷ In Chapter 5 I will argue that such actions have the quality of being fine.

caution is required. First, I submit that we should not thereby reduce ‘what the virtuous agent would do’ to some *mere* physical event or change (‘the coins moving from A to B’);²⁸ that Aristotle tells us that “things are called just and temperate when they are such that the just and temperate person would do” (1105b5-7) strongly indicates that he has in mind here *actions*, things that an agent would *do* (πράξειεν).²⁹ If we are to identify the virtuous action with any physical events or changes, these must be the events or changes that correspond to acts of agency (the action of transferring the money to B, or the act of repaying the debt to B).³⁰ Indeed, in light of our second consideration, if the virtuous action is identified merely with some physical change, and not at least an act of agency, it is difficult to see how a mere physical change could be something that is chosen for its own sake.³¹

This brings us to a second reason for caution if we are to describe virtuous actions in terms of the physical or external element of what the virtuous agent does, since we need also to take care with respect to which changes we identify as the virtuous action. For Aristotle’s discussion of agency in *Physics* III reveals that where action is conceived of in terms of acting upon something,³² the agent’s action is not to be identified with a change in the agent, but rather, a change in the patient. Teaching is actualised not in the teacher, but in the student (202b8ff). And since an agent’s actions are not to be identified with changes in the agent,³³ Aristotle would not, for

²⁸ In fact, as Coope explains, Aristotle’s conception of change is such that – unlike modern philosophers, who suppose that there can be instances of an agent’s arm going up that are not instances of the agent raising her arm (owing, perhaps to anarchic hand syndrome) – he would not count instances of an arm going up that are not exercises of a causal power as *changes* in the appropriate sense, since their not being end-directed rules them out as such (2007, pp.135-136).

²⁹ Indeed, as we have seen, Aristotle has been very precise in his language throughout *NE* II 4, and if he wished to identify a virtuous action with some mere physical event, whether or not this was produced by an agent, he has the language to do so.

³⁰ For something to be an action, for Aristotle, is for it to be an exercise of an agent’s (active) causal power. The question of what, for Aristotle, it is for something to be an act of agency – what is it for something to be a causal power of an *agent’s* is a difficult question, and one that is beyond the scope of this discussion. Certainly, many acts of agency will be intentional, and will be performed as a result of an agent’s beliefs and desires, but unlike the Davidsonian picture of agency, it is not the presence of beliefs and desires that make something an act of agency. Importantly for this account too, different sets of beliefs and desires can result in the same action.

³¹ Moreover, this consideration should make us wary of being too deflationary in our specification of ‘what the virtuous person would do’, even if we require that this is an act of agency. So, for example, we may do better to identify the action that the virtuous agent would perform in somewhat more intensional terms, such as ‘repaying a debt’, rather than ‘transferring money to B’. This of course raises questions about the individuation of such actions. For discussion, see Charles (1984).

³² N.b. When Aristotle discusses agency in *Physics* III, he does not have in mind the contemporary sense of agency, where to be an agent is to be capable of intentional action, say. He allows that inanimate objects can be agents too. Nevertheless, his discussion does include reference to what we would ordinarily count as agential actions, such teaching or building.

³³ As Coope (2005) explains, an agent’s actions may be changes *of* the agent, in so far as they are actualisations of one of her potentialities – “the sculptor’s sculpting is a change of the sculptor, since it is an actuality of a power of the

example, identify the agent's action of sharing with another person with the movements of the agent's hands.³⁴ So Aristotle would not, I submit, identify 'what the virtuous person would do' with some bodily movements, even if these are acts of agency.

2.5.1 THE PRIORITY OF PRAXIS

I suggest, in fact, that Aristotle's remark in (i), that "things (πράγματα) are called just and temperate, when they are such as the just and temperate person would do (πράξειεν)" points to a way in which we might go about characterising virtuous actions. The virtuous agent, as we have seen, performs some action and does so knowingly, choosing the action for its own sake, and from a firm and unchanging state; her action is performed in a specific, psychologically determinate way. In identifying the virtuous action, we can begin by looking at the virtuous agent and whatever she does, and then specifying that the virtuous action is whatever she does, but where the psychological states of the agent are determinable.

Taken in this way, Aristotle's remark at (i) would seem to indicate a certain priority that the activity of the virtuous agent has in our thinking about virtuous action. Some have taken this enigmatic remark to suggest that token actions *become* virtuous when performed by a virtuous agent, and so to imply that these actions are neutral with respect to value when not performed by a virtuous agent. (The actions of a learner on this reading are then not in fact virtuous, for they become so only when performed by someone who is virtuous already). But this is not the claim that Aristotle is making here. He does not claim that token actions *become* virtuous when performed by a virtuous agent, but rather that the actions that a virtuous agent *would perform* (πράξειεν) on a given occasion, those are the ones we call just.³⁵

sculptor. Similarly, the bronze's becoming a sculpture is a change of the bronze, since it is an actuality of a power of the bronze" (2005, p.205) – but to ask where the changes are *in*, is to ask a different question. It is to say what undergoes the change, and this Aristotle argues, must be the patient.

³⁴ Of course, in the case of a basic action like 'raising an arm', we can identify this action with a bodily movement of the agent, namely 'the arm's going up'.

In response to certain contemporary philosophers of action, who would argue that the action of raising an arm cannot be identified with the event an arm's going up, since this would appear to identify the cause (the action of raising an arm) with its effect (the arm going up), Aristotle can argue that the action of raising an arm is the cause not of the process of the arm's going up, but of the state of the arm's being up (Coope, 2007). Hence, there is no problem in supposing that the action of raising an arm is the same event as an arm's going up.

³⁵ Vasilioi attributes this view to Taylor, who reads this passage as evidence of the 'definitional priority' of the agent. Vasilioi takes definitional priority to be closely related to metaphysical priority, and argues that such priority results in a vicious circle "since it is impossible both that virtuous actions *become* virtuous by being done by virtuous agents and that virtuous agents become virtuous by doing virtuous actions" (2011, p.176).

I think this remark can be seen as part of Aristotle’s project of shifting our focus when thinking about virtuous action away from thinking about action merely in terms of ‘what is done’, towards thinking about action in a way that includes both the thing done and the determinate psychological facts about the agent by whom the action is authored. I suggest, thus, that we can take (i) to point towards the following idea: when we think about virtuous action, we should start by thinking of the virtuous agent and the way in which she acts – which as I have said, consists in her acting with a specific psychologically determinate state. The virtuous agent is one who is in such a condition that she is able to read, and be moved by, the relevant moral features of situations, to see what practically speaking is demanded of her, and to act accordingly. We begin by looking at a psychologically determinate way of acting, and then specify that the way of acting may be psychologically determinate, and that so conceived, this action then is something that could be performed by a variety of agents. Virtuous action conceived of as divorced from the agent’s strict authorship and own responsiveness to the moral features of the world is then posterior in account to the psychologically determinate action of the virtuous agent, which is conceptually prior.

This is not to say that for example ‘just action’, conceived of in the posterior sense, only in terms of the thing done, is not properly speaking ‘just’.³⁶ Aristotle says precisely the opposite: the virtue acquisition thesis states that we become just by doing *just things* (1103a31-b2), he tells us that we come to act justly by doing *just things* many times (1105b4-5), we are informed that *things are called just* when they are such as the just person would do (1105b5-7), and he concludes his argument with the assertion that we speak well when we say that we become just by doing *just things* (1105b9-12).

The thought is rather that in our thinking about just action, we should begin by thinking about the kind of action that is chosen by an agent who is sensitive to the relevant moral features of a situation; just action that is performed by an agent in this specific, psychologically determinate way is conceptually prior to such action where the psychological states of the agent

In fact, it is not clear that when Taylor speaks of the definitional priority of the agent he has in mind the idea that an action *becomes* virtuous when performed by a virtuous agent, as Vasiliou interprets him, and not rather the kind of priority in account I argue for below.

³⁶ Many commentators take this to be the implication of this remark. Stewart calls these actions “*ὁμωνύμως δίκαια*” (1892, p.183); Gauthier & Jolif write: ‘*l’action vertueuse ne doit pas découler d’une disposition passagère, mais d’un état habituel de caractère qui rend cette activité comme naturelle*’ (1958-59, p.130); Hardie calls these actions “not strictly virtuous” (1968, p.104); Taylor writes that: “[...]in the case of the virtues extra conditions concerning the agent must be satisfied *for the act to be virtuous*’ (2006, p.83); Vasiliou states that “it will only be a *truly virtuous* action if the agent is motivated in the appropriate way” (2007, 52 n.22), my emphases.

are determinable; the specific determination has priority over the determinable. But that does not mean that the psychologically determinable action cannot still be 'just'.

Developmentally, however, the priority is reversed. Because the 'the thing that is done' is something alienable, it is possible for an agent who is not herself just and who does not act justly to nevertheless perform a just action. So while conceptually, the psychologically determinate action of the virtuous agent has priority over psychologically determinable virtuous action, developmentally the agent starts with the virtuous action which may be performed in a variety of ways,³⁷ and through her practice comes to act in the specific way that the virtuous agent does, becoming an author of such actions in a strict sense. But we have no hope of becoming virtuous and the author of our actions in this strict sense without doing just and temperate things.

2.6 THE EXPLANATORY TASK

I have argued in this chapter, via a reading of Aristotle's argument in *NE* II 4, that whilst the student of virtue and the virtuous agent both perform virtuous actions, their action should nevertheless be regarded as importantly different. There is something distinctive about the action of a virtuous agent, and it is towards this distinctive way of acting – towards becoming full, and strict authors of virtuous actions – that the learner's practice is directed. Our challenge, then, is to explain how it is that through performing virtuous actions, but not yet doing so virtuously, a learner can come over time to act virtuously. How does a learner progress from performing alienable actions, actions that are strictly speaking *of* the virtuous agent, to being an author of her actions in the same strict sense as a virtuous agent?

We need now to turn from the *praxis* of the virtuous agent to the action of the learner, and to examine how we should conceive of her performance of virtuous actions in such a way that this transition is intelligible.

³⁷ A particular learner's action is, of course, psychologically determinate – she will act with some determinate set of psychological states – but she does not act in the particular determinate way that the virtuous agent does, and different learners (some successful, some not, perhaps) may act in different psychologically determinable ways.

3 CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I argued that Aristotle in *NE* II 4 establishes an important distinction between the action of a virtuous agent and that of a learner who is not (yet) virtuous. The virtuous agent performs virtuous actions virtuously – she acts knowingly, chooses such actions for their own sake, and acts from a stable and unchanging state – and it is towards this end that a learner’s practice of virtuous actions is directed. The learner’s action is closely related to that of the virtuous agent – the learner performs the actions that a virtuous agent would perform in a given circumstance – but is nevertheless importantly distinct.

In this chapter, I want to turn our attention from the *telos* of the development process – that is, from the activity of the mature virtuous agent – to the not-virtuously-performed action of the learner, and ask how we should conceive of this. I approach this question by way of a demand that has been placed on characterisations of the learner’s action, namely the demand that the learner’s action be, importantly, continuous with that of the virtuous agent. Various commentators have emphasised that accounts of the learner’s action which present this as only coincidentally, or in a very minimal way, like that of a virtuous agent make mysterious how such action could result in the formation of virtuous dispositions and her coming to act just as a virtuous agent does. As such, many have attempted to show the ways in which there is continuity between the two, with a view to explaining just how virtue might emerge from the practice of virtuous actions.

But whilst such concerns are well motivated, and commentators are right to stress the need for some form of continuity in action, it is easy to overlook another feature of the learner’s action that it is essential to acknowledge, namely that it is something that must develop. We need to allow for the possibility that there is also a change that occurs in the learner and the way that she acts, and that there is development and progress that must take place over the course of her practice. Whilst accounts of the learner’s action which present it as radically discontinuous with that of a virtuous agent might make mysterious the formation of virtuous dispositions, accounts which suppress too much the differences between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous

agent seem equally to exclude the possibility of any significant change in the developing subject and the way in which she acts; the sort of change we might have thought the practice of virtuous actions was supposed to effect (1105b4-5). The challenge, then, is to find a conception of the learner's action which meets both of these requirements: one which does not leave mysterious how virtuous agency and virtuous activity could ever emerge from the learner's practice, but allows at the same time that there is something transformative about such practice, as Aristotle himself indicates.

3.2 A REQUIREMENT OF CONTINUITY

Aristotle's discussion of moral habituation in the early chapters of *NE* II points to an intimate connection between the actions of a learner and of those of a virtuous agent, and it is to this connection that commentators appeal in arguing that there is a strong continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent.

In *NE* II 1, recall, Aristotle concludes that "states come about through like activities (*ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται*)" (1103b21-22), and continues: "that is why we must perform the right activities, since [different] states follow in accordance with the differences in these (*διὸ δεῖ τὰς ἐνεργείας ποιᾶς ἀποδιδόναι: κατὰ γὰρ τὰς τούτων διαφορὰς ἀκολουθοῦσιν αἱ ἕξεις*)" (1103b22-23). That like states arise from like activities is a claim that is reiterated in what follows, notably in *NE* III 5 when Aristotle writes, on the topic of responsibility for one's character and actions, that only "a totally insensible person would not know that a given activity is the source of the corresponding state (*τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν περὶ ἕκαστα αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται, κομιδῇ ἀναισθήτου*)" (1114a13-14).

In *NE* II 2 meanwhile, having observed the ways in which virtues are both cultivated and destroyed, Aristotle writes that not only are the sources and destruction of the virtues found in the same things, "but the exercise of the virtues will also be in the same things (*ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ ἐνέργειαι ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔσονται*)" (1104a8-29). And he continues to point to the connection between what one does on the way to acquiring a state, and what one will be able to do once one is in that state, through an analogy with health and strength. By standing firm in situations people become brave, and once they are brave they will be most capable of standing firm (1104b1-3).

By connecting the claim that "we become just by doing just things" (1103b1), with the claim that "things are called just and temperate, when they are such as the just and temperate person would do (*τὰ μὲν οὖν πράγματα δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα λέγεται, ὅταν ᾗ τοιαῦτα οἷα ἂν ὁ δίκαιος ἢ ὁ*

σώφρων πράξειεν)” (1105b5-7), I argued in Chapter 2 that this reveals that both the student of virtue and the virtuous agent perform virtuous actions. But in light of the close connection alluded to in these passages between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent, and a desire to make intelligible the development of virtuous dispositions from the performance of virtuous actions, various commentators have seen the need to stipulate further continuity between the action of the learner and that of a virtuous agent, beyond their performing the same virtuous actions.

Sherman, for example, places great stress on the importance of the conditions that virtue meets being reflected in the educational process (1989, p.159), and for this reason argues that our account of the learner’s practice must show the origins of her practical wisdom. Others meanwhile have registered concerns with accounts that suggest a significant discontinuity between the actions of learners and those of virtuous agents, with Broadie, for example, writing of Aristotle in *NE* II 4 that “the more he stresses the differences, the more one is entitled to wonder how merely performing the actions leads to moral character” (1991, p.104).¹ The question is: what sort of differences between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent would make the development of virtue appear problematic, and precisely what sort of continuity do we require? I want to begin by examining an objection that has recently been pressed against the distinction between a learner’s action and that of a virtuous agent defended in the last chapter, before considering more concrete ways in which continuity between the two has been demanded.

3.3 THE CONTINUITY WORRY

I argued in the previous chapter that Aristotle establishes a distinction between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent, according to which the latter agent performs virtuous actions

¹ Hursthouse approaches the issue of continuity from a different perspective, beginning not with the mature virtuous agent and asking how we should conceive of the young learner in light of this, but by stressing what she takes to be “a specially realistic feature of Aristotle’s thought”, namely that:

he never forgets the fact that we were all once children. To read almost any other famous moral philosopher is to receive the impression that we, the intelligent adult readers addressed, sprang fully formed from our father’s brow. That children form part of the furniture of the world occasionally comes up in passing (about as often as the mention of non-human animals), but the utterly basic fact that we were once as they are, and that whatever we are now is continuous with how we were then, is completely ignored (1998, p.14).

I think this, indeed, is one of the central concerns of Burnyeat’s account too:

from all this it follows not only that for a long time moral development must be a less than fully rational process, but also, what is less often acknowledged, that a mature morality must in large part continue to be what it originally was, a matter of responses deriving from sources other than reflective reason (1980, p.80).

virtuously (that is, knowingly, choosing them for their own sake, and from a firm and unchanging state), whilst the former does not. Yet accounts which maintain such a distinction between the learner and the virtuous agent have come under recent scrutiny in an article by Marta Jimenez, who argues that Aristotle's apparent solution to the puzzle of *NE* II 4 gives rise to what she calls a 'Problem of Continuity'. For, Jimenez argues:

if we take the view to be that learners become virtuous by doing virtuous actions in a different way to how virtuous people do them – i.e. *not virtuously* – then it is hard to see how actions performed in that way can contribute to the formation of truly virtuous dispositions (2016, p.4).

Thus she argues that if habituation is to be successful, we should grant that a learner *can* fulfil “at least occasionally and at least to some degree the requirements for virtuously performed virtuous action”, thus enabling us “to see the origins of the capacity to choose well and the stability and firmness required for virtue” (2016, p.17-18).² If a learner could not fulfil the requirements for virtuously performed action, at least on occasion and at least to some degree, Jimenez argues that it is unclear how virtuous dispositions could be formed as a result of her practice.

The addition of “at least to some degree” in her positive proposal is important I take it, for it would certainly be problematic to argue that a learner could meet the requirements for acting virtuously on occasion – and so act in this way on such occasions, as I will presently argue. Aristotle's remarks in *NE* II 4, as I have already argued, reveal that to act virtuously is something distinctive of the virtuous agent, and once we recognise this, it becomes both apparent that a learner could not act in this way, and less clear why the learner's not acting in this way should be regarded as problematic. It will be helpful to examine Jimenez' concern and positive proposal alongside Aristotle's remarks in *NE* II 4, to understand what kind of continuity between the learner's action and that of the virtuous agent we should and should not be demanding.

Jimenez is concerned that if a learner acts *not-virtuously* it is then hard to see how in so acting virtuous dispositions could emerge. Yet it should be clear that if we were to suppose that a learner could meet all the requirements for acting virtuously (and thus act virtuously), even 'on occasion', this would appear seriously to threaten the distinction between the learner's action and that of the virtuous agent established in the previous chapter, according to which only a virtuous agent can act virtuously. One might perhaps think we should then revise the view arrived at in the

² It is for this reason that Jimenez reads the disanalogy between virtues and skills at 1105a29-b4 as she does (see §2.4.1.3 above). Jimenez argues that the disanalogy points to the conditions that must be met by a learner if her action is to be successful: a learner in the case of skills must pay attention to the product and the effect her actions have on this; a learner in the case of the virtues must herself be in the conditions specified at 1105a31-33.

previous chapter, yet our close examination there of Aristotle’s argument in *NE* II 4 revealed to us the importance of maintaining the distinction between the virtuously performed action of a virtuous agent and the action of a learner. In terms of the interpretation of the argument of II 4 itself, it is clear that we need to maintain that a learner does not act virtuously, if we are to maintain – as Aristotle seeks to show – that the learner, in performing virtuous actions, is not thereby virtuous. In the second clause of the grammar example at 1105a23-25, Aristotle writes that an agent “will be grammatical, then, if he does something grammatical and grammatically (τότε οὖν ἔσται γραμματικός, ἐὰν καὶ γραμματικόν τι ποιήσῃ καὶ γραμματικῶς)”, and *mutatis mutandis* for the case of virtue. If someone does something grammatical and does it grammatically, then she is a grammarian; likewise, if she does something virtuous and does it virtuously, she is virtuous.³ Thus if a learner acts virtuously, it would follow from these remarks that she is thereby virtuous. But Aristotle is seeking precisely to show that a learner is *not* yet virtuous.⁴

If Jimenez were to propose that a learner could meet the requirements for acting virtuously (and thus do so) on occasion, without her qualification, this would conflict with the distinction Aristotle needs to maintain in this passage. It is important, then, that Jimenez later adds that a learner could (only) meet the requirements of virtuously performed action “to some degree”, for if she only meets the requirements “to some degree” – by meeting two, but not three of the conditions, say – it is possible to maintain still that a learner does not yet act virtuously. Indeed, Jimenez’ subsequent discussion reveals that she takes meeting the requirements of virtuously performed action “at least to some degree” to consist in her acting (on occasion) with a virtuous motivation (and perhaps also with knowledge), whilst not yet possessing “stable dispositions” (2016, p.17). And since for Aristotle the possession of a stable state is a condition of an action’s being performed virtuously – indeed, the stability condition, along with the choice condition, is marked by Aristotle as being *all-important* (1104b3-4) – this shows that it would not be possible to act virtuously without being in possession of a stable state (even if one fulfilled the knowledge

³ See also: “But the person who does these things is not just or temperate, but only if they act as just and temperate people act (δίκαιος δὲ καὶ σώφρων ἔστιν οὐχ ὁ ταῦτα πράττων, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕτω πράττων ὡς οἱ δίκαιοι καὶ σώφρονες πράττουσιν)” (1105b7-9); if someone does virtuous actions *as the virtuous person does*, then they are virtuous.

⁴ Jimenez does not recognise the importance of this distinction here, since she endorses the possibility reading of the original challenge, and hence supposes the challenge can be met merely by showing that it is indeed possible to perform virtuous actions without being virtuous. If we recognise, as I have argued at length, that the original challenge does not concern the possibility of performing certain sorts of actions, but rather the relation between virtue and action, we see that Aristotle needs to maintain that a learner performs virtuous actions, but does not perform them virtuously, if he is to maintain that the learner in performing virtuous actions is not virtuous already. If Aristotle were to allow that a learner can perform virtuous actions virtuously, he would no longer have the resources to show this.

and choice conditions). Jimenez' use of the phrase "at least to some degree" appears to be intended to pick out the idea that a learner can (on occasion) fulfil two but not three of the conditions on virtuously performed action.⁵ From §3.4 I will suggest that we will do better to examine more concretely the kind of continuity in the learner's action that is required, rather than talking of fulfilling the requirements for acting virtuously "at least to some degree", since this might be taken to suggest – falsely – that a learner can thus act virtuously.

So what, then, are we to make of the supposed 'problem of continuity' (2016, p.4) that Jimenez claims arises from Aristotle's distinction in *NE* II 4? Jimenez' remarks in the passage quoted above are again somewhat misleading, for they imply that if we are to conceive of the learner as not acting virtuously, we will be unable to explain how the practice of *not-virtuously* performed actions (as she puts it) could result in the formation of virtuous dispositions. But if we reflect on what for Aristotle it is to act virtuously, we can see that the fact that a learner does not act in this way is not as problematic as Jimenez' remarks above seem to imply.

As we have seen, for an action to count as virtuously performed the agent must act knowingly, she must choose the action for its own sake, and her action must issue from a stable state. It is a very demanding picture, but it is the picture Aristotle presents all the same. Now if we take seriously, in particular, the presence of the stability condition in Aristotle's definition of acting virtuously, this reveals that the adverb is intended to point to something *distinctive* about the action of a virtuous agent, for only she has the requisite stability. Once we recognise this, it becomes less clear why it should be regarded as problematic that a learner does not act in precisely this way. To act virtuously is clearly the *end* towards which a learner's practice of virtuous actions is aimed; to say that a learner does not act virtuously, is to say that she does not yet act in this distinctive way. But this should not in itself be regarded as problematic. For compare this case with a language learner. A skilled speaker of a foreign language speaks fluently, whilst the learner does not. To claim that a learner does not speak in this way does not in itself entail a problem; we are not puzzled as to how a learner can move from not speaking fluently to speaking fluently. Thus the distinction between the learner's action and that of the virtuous agent does not obviously

⁵ We might suppose that there are more appropriate ways of expressing the thought that a learner meets some but not all the conditions of virtuously performed actions than with the phrase "to some degree". The phrase may also be intended to pick out the thought that with regards to those conditions that are fulfilled (the knowledge and choice conditions), the learner's fulfilment of those conditions is also not 'full' (her knowledge, perhaps, is not as extensive as that of the virtuous agent's). As Jimenez herself admits, however, the learner does not meet the stability condition (indeed, one cannot possess a stable character 'on occasion').

entail a ‘problem of continuity’, and so we should resist the thought that only in allowing that a learner *can* act virtuously could the development of virtue ever be intelligible.

I suggest then that we ought to think about the learner’s action in more concrete terms, and to consider how we should conceive of her not-yet-virtuously-performed action in such a way that the development of virtue and realisation of virtuous activity is intelligible.

3.4 JIMENEZ’ UNDERLYING CONCERN: RADICAL DISCONTINUITY

Jimenez’ concern, I take it, is that to say that a learner does not act virtuously might suggest that she acts in a way that is radically discontinuous with the action of a virtuous agent:

the main problem is that this reading might lead us to think that learners do not fulfil the conditions for virtuously performed virtuous action at all and thus overlook the conclusion that... if habituation is to be successful, then the actions of the learners must be done well and not just in any old way (2016, p.17).

Her worry is that a ‘deflationary’ picture of the learner’s action might suggest that her actions are merely coincidentally like those of a virtuous agent, such that it is hard to see how anything like virtue could develop from her practice. To illustrate her worry, Jimenez offers an example from the case of grammatical skill:

If a learner of Spanish keeps copying random words from a list and putting them together in sentences, even if she were so lucky that she hit upon correct sentences on every occasion (thus producing grammatical outcomes), we would not say that she is really learning anything in that process. To learn something through her practice, the learner’s productions cannot be merely coincidental nor simply done in any old way (2016, p.14-5).

Jimenez is of course right that in such a case it would be mysterious how a student comes to develop the kind of knowledge that is constitutive of grammatical skill. But why should the claim that a learner does not act virtuously lead us to suppose that she acts in ‘any old way’, and that her action is to be understood as anything like this picture of learning – or rather, precisely *not* learning – Spanish?

3.4.1 MECHANICAL ACTION

The Spanish example offered by Jimenez presents a picture of (not-) learning in which a subject repeatedly hits on correct Spanish sentences, thus producing something that would count as a ‘grammatical’ outcome, and Jimenez is right to claim that such a process could not conceivably result in the subject’s *learning* Spanish, since the subject is not aware of, or attending in any way, to what she is doing. Now if the learner’s not yet virtuously performed action were like this, it

would indeed by mysterious how such action would result in virtue. But as we shall see shortly, we need not conceive of the learner's action in so deflationary a way that she merely performs coincidentally virtuous actions without any form of cognitive engagement, as is the case in Jimenez' Spanish example.

Jimenez' Spanish example conjures a picture of the learner's action that, admittedly, was at least implicit in a number of accounts of Aristotelian habituation in the recent past; namely, those accounts which portray the habituation process to be 'mindless' or 'mechanical'. Such a picture has been forcefully rejected by commentators over the last forty years, but it will be helpful to briefly review a number of so-called 'mechanical' accounts, to bring into view what a problematic picture of the learner's action would look like, and the form that a corrective to this should take.

3.4.1.1 PRODUCING MECHANICAL OUTPUTS

The past tendency to conceive of the learner's action as mechanical was often merely implicit,⁶ and as we will see, is revealed in a number of different accounts of what is effected in the habituation process. Perhaps one of the few explicit statements of a mechanical view of the learner's action is to be found in Grant, who in his 1885 commentary, writes:

A mechanical theory is here given both of the intellect and the moral character, as if the one could be acquired by teaching, the other by a course in habits...⁷ We need only compare the theory of virtue in this book with the discussions in the *Meno* to see how immensely moral philosophy had gained in definiteness in the meantime. While becoming definite and systematic, however, it had also to an extent become scholastic and mechanical (Grant, 1885, p.480-1).⁸

Whilst Grant, attributes to Aristotle a mechanical view, this quotation offers relatively little information as to what such a view amounts to. For further insight, one might, however, draw on other parts of Grant's commentary on *NE II 1*, such as the following which seeks to explicate Aristotle's claim that character states are formed out of corresponding acts. Grant writes:

In each act and moment at the outset of life, something which was potential in us and quite indeterminate for good or evil (*δύναμις*) is brought into actuality (*ἐνέργεια*) and now is determinately either good or bad. *This determination, by the law of habits, reproduces itself,*

⁶ There are some, indeed, who explicitly reject the idea that the learner's action should be conceived of as 'mindless', or 'mechanical', whilst nevertheless implicitly assuming such a picture (see for example Engberg-Pedersen, 1983, and Hursthouse's 1986 criticism that Engberg-Pedersen presents a picture of habituation as mindless).

⁷ It is worth noting that the term 'mechanical' is used here to describe Aristotle's view of character, rather than his view habituation *per se*, though Grant's immediate reference to the idea that character is acquired 'by a course in habits' suggests for him an intimate connection between the nature of a character and the process by which it is acquired. See also (1885, p.458) for reference to the 'mechanical' nature of Aristotle's theory.

⁸ Stewart in his commentary also cites Grant's remarks in apparent agreement (1892, pp.170-1).

and thus there is no longer left an ambiguous δύναμις, but a ἔξις, or definite tendency for good or evil, is superinduced... It will be observed that why *an act tends to reproduce itself* Aristotle does not inquire (1885, p.484, my emphasis).

The allusion here to an act *reproducing itself* suggests a conception of habituation in which this merely involves the repetition of similar actions resulting in a mindless tendency to reproduce such acts.⁹ Grant does not refer to the process, nor the result, as ‘mindless’, but the suggestion that ‘an act reproduces itself’ suggests that the resulting moments of action owe to the operation of a mechanism rather than any kind of thoughtful responsiveness on the part of the agent.

Interestingly, I think we can see a remnant of this kind of view in Curzer, who whilst stressing that habituation cannot be mindless, writes that:

It is easy enough to see how performing virtuous acts can provide dispositions of virtuous action. . . But the acquisition of the two remaining components of virtue seems mysterious. How do we acquire the ability to identify virtuous acts? How do we come to desire virtuous acts for their own sake? (2012, pp.318-19).

That Curzer takes the emerging disposition to act (which he takes to be a discrete ‘component’ of virtue) to be easily explained by the practice of virtuous actions suggests a picture of habituation in which the practice of actions mechanically results in a tendency to so act.

Given that Aristotle’s picture of moral virtue and virtuous activity involves more than a blind tendency to act in certain ways few commentators have supposed that Aristotle endorses anything like a picture of moral habituation on which a learner mindlessly repeats certain actions,¹⁰ and

⁹ Support for the thought that repetition plays some involvement in the course of habituation can be gleaned from a number of sources. At 1105b3 Aristotle states that it is by doing just and temperate actions many times that we achieve virtue, and in the *EE* Aristotle defines as habituated anything which “as a result of a pattern of conduct that is not innate, by repeated (πολλάκις), movement of one sort of another, so that it is eventually capable of being active in that way (οὕτως ἤδη τὸ ἐνεργητικόν)” (1220b1-3). Elsewhere, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes that “acts are done from habit because individuals have done them many times before” (1369b6), and both the *Rhetoric* and *De Memoria* associate habitual events with what is frequent and repeated (*Rhet.* 1370a6; *Mem* 452a27).

In criticising the emphasis placed on repetition in such accounts, I do not mean to suggest that repetition plays no role in the student’s habituation, for the above quotations reveal that it clearly does. Broadie writes that while “forming a habit is connected with repetition, [...] where what is repeated are (for example) just acts, habituation cannot be a mindless process, and the habit (once formed) of acting justly cannot be blind in its operations” (1991, p.109), and goes on to stress the variety of actions and responses that fall under the description of ‘just action’ and which must thus be repeated. In this case what repetition of just acts would afford is experience of a *variety* of actions, rather than repeated performance of the very same thing.

A certain emphasis on repetition does appear to be a symptom of mechanical accounts, and I suggest that such accounts tend to present the achievements of habituation as owing to the operation of a mechanism on a subject, rather than to any active involvement of the agent.

¹⁰ Whilst those commentators who have (at least implicitly) presented such views of the learner’s habituation do not tend to offer an analysis of the nature of the learner’s action, in accordance with my characterisation in Chapter 2 of the learner’s action as an act of agency which thus involves the exercise of certain psychological states, (to be charitable) we should not suppose that even on the mechanical view the learner’s action would be *entirely* mindless.

thereby develops a mindless and mechanical tendency to repeat those actions. Nevertheless, there are other forms that the so-called ‘mechanical view’ of the learner’s habituation has taken, and it will be helpful to take stock of these too, before looking to the kind of correctives that have been proposed to these views.

3.4.1.2 THE PLEASURE OF REPETITION

Despite the almost complete rejection of mechanical accounts such as Grant’s, there remained for much longer a certain tendency to revert to a mechanical view of the learner’s habituation in explaining the cultivation of a learner’s desiderative states. This tendency can be found in a number of versions of the traditional, non-rational picture of virtue and habituation discussed in Chapter 1; in particular, in those views which emphasise the need for ‘force’ in bringing the non-rational elements of the soul into a good condition.¹¹ Such views often begin with Aristotle’s claim in X 9 that “passion yields not to reason but to force (βίη)” (1179b29),¹² and suppose that it is for this reason that habituation, conceived of as non-rational (and for some, non-cognitive) process, is thus needed to bring these into line with the prescriptions of reason.

It is worth noting, as an aside, that when Aristotle claims that emotion yields only to force, we should recognise, as Joachim and Engberg-Pedersen do not, that he is talking here about a formed character. Aristotle is speaking here only of the grown up person who lives *kata pathos*, and is claiming that if a person has formed certain emotional dispositions, these will not be amenable to reason, and will only yield to force. But as Hursthouse remarks, “the passions of those who have yet to be habituated and are being so do not necessarily have to yield – to force or reason. They have to be amended, developed, complicated and enriched” (1986, p.214).

As I argued in Chapter 2, if an agent accidentally slipped and shot a bullet from a gun, this would not count as having performed, say, a brave action (it may not in fact count as an action at all). Indeed, if any advocate of a mechanical view held that the learner’s habituation consisted in performing ‘actions’ conceived of in this way, they would invite the charge that this conception of the learner’s action does not even meet the requirements that a learner perform *just*, *temperate* and *brave* actions. To be charitable to the various mechanical views canvassed, then, advocates must then grant that a learner acts intentionally at least in minimal way as required for what she does to count as an action and moreover a virtuous action. Nevertheless, we can still claim that such accounts present the learner’s habituation as ‘mindless’ to the extent that she does not attend particularly closely to what she is doing, to the nature of her action and importantly the situations to which it is (or ought to be) a response.

¹¹ See for example Joachim (1951), Engberg-Pedersen (1983).

¹² Joachim commenting on the X 9 claim writes:

force, then – external compulsion – must be applied: the character of the pupil must be prepared by a training in which he himself is *passively subject* to authority, in order that he may become amenable to the influence of reasoning and true theory” (1951, p.297-8, my emphasis).

Joachim does not explain how the use of force results in the formation of virtuous emotional dispositions; it is presumably taken as a brute fact that such dispositions will result from this.

In any case, whilst those commentators who maintain that habituation is required in order to bring the passions of a subject into line by force do not maintain that all that is effected by the habituation process is a mere behavioural tendency, they nevertheless appeal in a similar fashion to the ‘mechanism’ of habituation and in particular the power of repetition, which act upon the learner to transform her desires not only by non-rational, but also non-cognitive means.

One version of such a view is that proposed by Engberg-Pedersen, who argues that we can conceive of the learner as being ‘forced’ to perform virtuous actions under psychological pressure,¹³ and that through repeatedly performing actions that are initially undesired, the learner forms new desires to perform those actions, on the basis of the empirical fact that:

things which are at first felt to be painful are no longer so ‘when they have become customary’ (*synēthē genomena* 1179b35-36). Thus the mechanism of the process of habituation depends for its effect on a fact about the phenomenon of ‘custom’. (cf. also *Rhet.* 1.10 1369b16-18) (1983, p.183).

Desiring for Aristotle involves in some way apprehending the object of desire as pleasant or attractive (see e.g. *NE* 1113a23-24; *DA* 433a27-29; 413b23-24; 414b1-6),¹⁴ and so Engberg-Pedersen must suppose – if habituation is to result in the formation of *desires* for virtuous action, not simply a lack of resistance to it – that the student must also come to find her habitual action pleasant. Yet the *NE* passage that Engberg-Pedersen quotes only tells us that virtuous actions will not be painful when they have become habitual, and not that those things which were once painful are rendered positively pleasurable by habituation. If it is the case that repetition only renders painless what was previously painful, such an account of habituation can then only explain, at most, the development of *enkrateia*;¹⁵ if the agent does not take pleasure in virtuous actions and positively desire to perform these virtuous actions, she cannot count as virtuous.

To explain how the repetition of actions could result in the agent taking *pleasure* in those actions, Engberg-Pedersen could however appeal to the other passages he cites, namely the claim

¹³ Engberg-Pedersen takes as his model Aristotle’s account of forced acts in his treatment of the voluntary in *NE* III in order to explain how it is that “habituation may accomplish what reason cannot” (1983, p.182), viz. the training of a student’s desiderative states. In *NE* III Aristotle presents an account of acts that an agent is forced to perform under psychological pressure (1110a5-8); acts which can be contrasted with those which are truly enforced, unintentional and to which an agent contributes nothing, such as when someone directs another person’s hand when they are asleep. Engberg-Pedersen suggests we should see a similar mechanism as lying behind the efficacy of habituation (1983, p.182); just as a person acting under the ransom of a Tyrant, will perform some unwanted act in order to avoid some greater evil (the murder of their family, say), the person being habituated is likewise ‘forced’ to do some particular act in order to avoid evils she takes to be greater. This, he takes it, “is the point of the remark about passions yielding to force and the mention of fear and punishment” (1983, p.182).

¹⁴ This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

¹⁵ This challenge is raised by Hursthouse (1983, p.210).

in the *Rhetoric* that “the familiar and the habitual are among the pleasurable; for people even do with pleasure many things they do not naturally find pleasant when they have grown accustomed to them (ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τὸ σὺνηθες καὶ τὸ ἐθιστὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡδέσιν: πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ τῶν φύσει μὴ ἡδέων, ὅταν συνεθισθῶσιν, ἡδέως ποιοῦσιν)” (*Rht.* 1369b16-18).¹⁶

In any case, on Engberg-Pedersen’s account, the student of virtue is forced to perform virtuous actions, and comes to desire to perform such actions because it is a fact (according to the *Rhetoric*) that when an action is repeated, and it becomes customary, it will no longer be painful. Like Grant’s account, then, the success of habituation comes down to the power of mindless repetition, and does not to this extent require any thoughtful engagement on the part of the learner.

3.4.1.3 PLEASURE THROUGH ASSOCIATION

A related account also appeals to the power of repetition to explain how a learner comes to take pleasure in virtuous actions and so to desire such action on future occasions. In this case, however, the student’s pleasure in such action is not explained by the inherent painlessness or pleasure of habitual action, but rather by the power of association. The learner is trained to take pleasure in virtuous action through the association of antecedent pleasures with such action. Thus it is supposed that the student will come to find such actions pleasurable by association and so be motivated to perform them in the future.

This is the thought that underlies the many accounts which appeal to the power of rewards in training a student to desire to perform virtuous actions.¹⁷ MacIntyre, for example, describes how

¹⁶ Curzer too discusses this passage in criticising a version of the ‘pleasure of the habitual’ view which he mistakenly attributes to Burnyeat. Curzer writes that:

Burnyeat attributes to Aristotle the view that repetition makes virtuous acts pleasant. But Aristotle never actually says this. He does say “things familiar and things habitual belong to the class of pleasant things; for there are many actions not naturally pleasant which men perform with pleasure, once they have become used to them. (*Rht.* 1369b15-19; 1179b35-6). But a few lines later Aristotle goes on to count among pleasures escape from painful or apparently painful things and the exchange of a greater pain for less (*Rht.* 1369b26-8). So in these passages his claim really is that habituation transforms acts that are not naturally pleasant into pleasant acts or less painful acts” (2012, p.325-6).

It is not clear, however, that Burnyeat does believe that repetition itself makes acts pleasant; he merely claims that learning to take proper enjoyment in objects takes time and practice (1980, p.78).

¹⁷ This is another view that has often been mistakenly attributed to Burnyeat. Fossheim (2007), for example, takes Burnyeat’s famous claim “that the child’s sense of pleasure [...] should be hooked up with just and noble things so that his unreasoned evaluative responses may develop in connection with the right objects” (Burnyeat, 1980, p.78) to imply that Burnyeat has in mind a picture of habituation according to which antecedent pleasures are associated, through repetition, with virtuous actions. Grönroos makes a similar attribution (2007, p.267, n.33).

But there is nothing to indicate that this is Burnyeat’s view. Burnyeat is not identifying as a problem the child’s motivation to perform virtuous actions, and proposing as a solution an appeal to the only thing that will motivate them to act, namely those things in which they already take pleasure, but rather is claiming that since the child’s (only)

a child might be brought to see what he calls the goods ‘internal to’ an activity, by means of goods ‘external to’ that activity, writing:

I wish to teach [a child] to play chess, although the child has no particular desire to learn the game. The child does however, have a very strong desire for candy... I therefore tell the child that if the child will play chess with me once a week, I will give the child 50 cents worth of candy. Thus motivated the child plays and plays to win (1981, p.188).

We see a similar picture in Lear, who also takes the learner to be motivated by an external pleasure:

The child will typically begin acting considerately in order to gain the reward or encouragement: that is, for an external pleasure. But, through repetition, the child begins to derive pleasure from the considerate acts themselves (1988, p.169).

Here again the role of repetition in producing the kinds of association needed is stressed.¹⁸

The role of ‘positive reinforcement’ in effecting the transformation of a student’s desires is challenged by Curzer (2002, 2012), who claims instead that pain rather than pleasure drives moral development.¹⁹ As evidence that Aristotle endorses negative reinforcement, Curzer appeals to Aristotle’s claims that “the many yield to compulsion more than to argument and to punishments more than to the fine (οἱ γὰρ πολλοὶ ἀνάγκη μᾶλλον ἢ λόγῳ πειθαρχοῦσι καὶ ζημίαις ἢ τῷ καλῷ)” (1180a4-5), and that the legislator “must impose corrective treatments and penalties on anyone who disobeys or lacks the right nature, and must completely expel the incurable (ἀπειθοῦσι δὲ καὶ ἀφυστέροις οὔσι κολάσεις τε καὶ τιμωρίας ἐπιτιθέναι, τοὺς δ’ ἀνιάτους ὅλως ἐξορίζειν)” (1180a8-10). Curzer claims moreover that “Aristotle does not take pain to be a mere side effect of moral development or even a minor contributor; he thinks that the pain drives the process” (2012, p.337).

This view might strike one as quite different to the ‘Associated Pleasures’ view, on the grounds that it takes pain, not pleasure, to drive the habituation process, yet the assumption that habituation works by a mechanism of association remains. On Curzer’s picture of habituation, a learner performs virtuous acts “over and over under the threat of pain” (2012, p.337), and by the ‘mechanism of internalising punishments’ she moves from being punished for vicious acts to

source of motivation is pleasure, we had better make sure this is aligned with the right objects from the start. See also Chapter 4 (§4.4).

¹⁸ See also Hutchinson (1995, p.213).

¹⁹ Some attempt to arbitrate between these positions is made by Taylor, who writes that: it is clear that Aristotle’s insistence that correct education proceeds via pleasure and distress (1104b9-16) stresses the importance both of positive reinforcement of desirable character traits via pleasure and negative reinforcement of undesirable traits via distress; at its simplest, we have to learn to like acting well and to dislike acting badly (2007, p.81 n.5).

punishing herself. By coming eventually to feel *aidōs* for vicious acts, he claims, the many come to desire to perform virtuous acts for their own sake.

On both the views that emphasise the role of reward in habituation, and Curzer's view which emphasises the role of punishment, the idea is that independent and antecedent pleasures and pains are associated with virtuous or vicious actions by means of repetition, such that students of virtue come to find (by association) virtuous actions pleasant and vicious actions painful, and thus to desire to perform virtuous actions and to avoid vicious actions.

3.4.1.4 SUMMARY

The first of the three forms of 'mechanical' accounts surveyed took the result of habituation to be a mindless tendency to produce certain actions, whereas the second two took the result to be a certain pleasure in producing such actions; all three however take the success of moral habituation to be attributable to the power of repeating the same, or similar, actions. None of the accounts represent the learner as cognitively engaged in any significant way with what she is doing (see n.10 above); nor, given what they take habituation to effect, do they appear to see this as necessary to her success.²⁰ To the extent that such views do not attribute to the learner any significant cognitive engagement in, or attention to, her action, they are similar to Jimenez' Spanish example, and as we will now see, have long been rejected owing to their failure to explain how virtue could emerge from such practice.

3.4.2 DISCERNING ACTION

Since the exercise of virtue involves more than simply repeating certain sorts of actions, but requires that a virtuous agent must discern what to do in a given situation, a view of the learner's action and the habituation process wherein the learner merely repeats certain actions without attending in any important sense to what she does, or the situations in which she finds herself, will be unable to explain how a learner comes to acquire the knowledge of virtuous action characteristic of a virtuous agent. The virtuous agent must be responsive to the details of situations and be able to discern, in a variety of situations, what action is required of her (see esp. 1105a32;

²⁰ Admittedly, Engberg-Pedersen does maintain that habituation "is a non-rational process that results in a desiderative state (of the *orektikon*) and a *non-rational cognitive state (of the faculty of perception)*" (1983, p.161, my emphasis), and argues that since one result of habituation is a cognitive state, habituation cannot be a mindless process (1983, p.158). His account of the training of the learner's pleasure, however, presents the learner as passively subject to a mechanism, and does not require the engagement of other cognitive capacities.

1143a33-34). And if anything like this ability is to develop through the practice of virtuous actions, commentators stress, it is clear that the learner must be attentive in her action, and not merely act in a 'mindless' way.²¹

Numerous scholars thus maintain that habituation is not blind, mindless training, but instead involves from the start both the exercise and the cultivation of the learners' perceptive and critical powers. Kraut, for example, argues that in order for an agent to know what is just in a given circumstance, it will be necessary that on some occasions they:

recognize that an equal division is what a situation calls for; at other times, he will see that some deserve more, or need more, than others; and that these are appropriate reasons for deviation from an allocation in which each gets the same share. To become just by repeatedly doing what is just is to encounter many situations in which one must come to a decision about what is just, and in this way to develop sufficient experience and insight regarding such matters (2012, p.538).

Or more recently Jimenez herself writes: "if learners do not exercise their perceptual and deliberative capacities in their practices towards virtue, then it becomes a mystery how they eventually develop them" (2016, p.6).

In these quotations we can discern two reasons for thinking that successful habituation must require the exercise of these capacities. On the one hand, there is the thought that these capacities are clearly operative in virtuous activity, and that the development of these capacities requires that the student must have had practice in using them.²² Without having practised using our critical or deliberative capacities, it is unclear how such capacities could ever develop, as mature engagement in virtuous activity surely requires that they do. On the other hand, there appears to be the suggestion in the quotation from Kraut that a learner's knowledge of virtuous action depends on her having paid thoughtful attention to what she does and what is demanded in

²¹ Sorabji presents his account of the role of intellect in virtue as a reaction to those who "have treated habituation as a mindless process sufficient for making men good" (1973-74, p.107; p.126); Cooper notes that "though [Aristotle] is not careful to say so, this process of training is not the purely mechanical thing it may at first glance seem: . . . the habituation must involve also (though Aristotle does not explain how it does so) the training of the mind" (1986, p.8); Hursthouse, indeed, regards as the deepest objection to Engberg-Pedersen's view of moral habituation that it "is the account of a *mechanism*, a mindless process" (1988, p.211). See Broadie (1991, p.109) quoted in n.9 above.

A number of commentators also compare a 'mindless' account of habituation to the training of an animal. McDowell writes: "it is clear that the habituation that produces excellences of character is not supposed to produce motivational propensities that are merely obedient to an extraneous exercise of reason like those of a trained animal (1996, p.28); Vasiliou too writes that "Aristotle's account of habituation is not simply the mindless training of one's appetites – training that, for example, might apply equally to a dog" (2007, p.42).

Vasiliou recognises the variation in what commentators take non-mindless accounts to consist in.

²² See, for example Kraut: "a just person is good at thinking about problems that call for a just response. That kind of thoughtfulness cannot be acquired by automatically and mindlessly repeating some single type of action like brushing one's teeth" (2012, p.539).

different situations in the course of her habituation. There is something, it seems, about the virtuous agent's epistemic condition that leads commentators to suppose that certain intellectual capacities must be operative in the course of the learner's habituation if we are to account for this achievement. In summary, it is supposed either that perceptual and deliberative capacities must be exercised if such capacities are to develop, and/or that they must be exercised if the agent is to gain the requisite knowledge of virtuous action.²³

Most commentators acknowledge, then, that a learner's action should be seen as continuous with that of the virtuous agent at least to the extent that she must attend to what she does and the circumstances in which she acts, exercising the perceptive and even deliberative capacities that we see exercised in mature virtuous activity. But this picture of the learner's action is perfectly consistent with the thought that a learner does not act virtuously. We now have in place at least one general demand on our conception of how the learner acts, namely that she must be attentive in the way described above.

3.5 VIRTUOUS MOTIVATION

Whilst the last four decades have seen a clear rejection of what might be called an 'extreme' deflationary conception of the learner's action, where this is taken to consist in the repetition of actions that are physically like those of the virtuous agent, but to be lacking their cognitive or intellectual components, a different kind of deflationary view of the learner's action has persisted. According to this view the learner's action differs from the virtuous agent's in respect of her motivation. Many regard this as the crucial distinction that Aristotle establishes between the learner and the virtuous agent in *NE* II 4. Thus Ross for example argues that:

the actions that produce virtue are not in their inner nature but only in their external aspect like those that virtue produces. Aristotle here (1105a17-b18) lays his finger with precision on the distinction between the two elements involved in a completely good action—(a) that the thing done should be the right thing to do in the circumstances, and (b) that it should be done from a good motive (1949, p.194).

²³ It is, I take it, on both of these grounds that intellectualists (see §1.2.2) have argued that habituation must involve the exercise of a learner's intellectual capacities, since they suppose either that moral virtue itself involves the exercise of such capacities, or that the kind of knowledge that a learner has could only be acquired through the exercise of these capacities. It is worth noting, however, that this demand has often been made in reaction to the kind of mechanical views described above (see esp. Sorabji 1973-74), and it is thus worth considering whether all of those who have made this demand would continue to insist that a learner's *intellectual* capacities must be operative in her habituation if it is to be successful, and not grant instead that habituation could involve the exercise of a subject's non-rational, but cognitive capacities.

Or more recently, Vasiliou writes:

What Aristotle needs... to solve to the puzzle of II.4 is not only a separation between virtuous action and motive but also the ability to describe the virtuous action, the action to be done, without using ethical terms (2007, p.52, n.22).²⁴

This view, however, has recently been subject to criticism from Jimenez, who has argued that accounts of the learner's action must allow for continuity in motive, as well as continuity in the ways already discussed. She argues that the central difficulty facing what she calls the 'motivationally neutral view' of the learner's action is that it introduces an apparent 'moral upbringing gap': "if the actions of the learners lack virtuous motivation, then it is not clear how learners are supposed to become virtuous by doing such actions" (2016, p.23):

If the actions of the learners of virtue differ in motive from those of virtuous agents, it is hard to see how repeatedly performing such actions should lead to the acquisition of a state to which proper motivation is crucial. The motivationally neutral conception thus creates a moral upbringing gap' similar to the gap seen by commentators in the explanations of moral development given by mechanistic theory (2016, p.24).

This should, of course, put us in mind of the continuity worry discussed in §3.3 above, which was levelled against the proposal that a learner does not act virtuously, and indeed I take it that it is in reality a concern about continuity in motivation that underpinned Jimenez' initial worry. The thought, I take it, is that to claim that a learner does not act virtuously might suggest that a learner should thus be understood as acting with a motive other than that of the virtuous agent, thus making mysterious, Jimenez believes, how she comes to develop the disposition to choose actions for their own sake that is characteristic of the virtuous agent.

In trying to develop our understanding of the learner's not yet virtuously performed action, we ought then to consider the issue of the learner's motivation and the merits of the picture Jimenez proposes in its place. It transpires in Books III and IV that 'acting for the sake of the noble' is characteristic of the virtuous agent and, as we will discuss further in Chapter 5, appears to replace Aristotle's talk of choosing virtuous actions for their own sake. Since this motivation is characteristic of the virtuous agent and, indeed, part of what her acting well consists in, Jimenez

²⁴ Irwin, whose interpretation of *NE* II 4 we examined in the previous chapter, puts Aristotle's initial challenge in terms of the motivational component of moral virtue: "We may suppose that if the actions are the same, their motive must be the same too, so that we can learn to be virtuous only if we already have the motive of the virtuous person" (p.1999, 195).

argues that “the actions of learners can and indeed must be done for the sake of the noble, even if learners do not yet have stable virtuous dispositions of character” (2016, p.7):

Since the learners’ virtuous actions must be performed well to contribute to the formation of virtue, they must be cases of properly hitting the intermediate in action, where the learners are both aware that they are doing so, and willing. In the case of the motivation factor, this means that the learners do not aim at the right goal under a different motivationally neutral description, but rather they aim at the noble goal insofar as it is noble. Only if this is the case can we understand how the activities of the learners eventually yield dispositions to choose the right actions for their own sake and not for some other motive (2016, p.30).

What Jimenez proposes, then, is a fairly rich conception of the learner’s action, and one in which there is a strong continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent. Far from repeatedly performing outwardly virtuous actions in a mindless or mechanical fashion, Jimenez’ successful learner not only intentionally performs virtuous actions, exercising her discriminatory capacities when she does so, but she performs such actions for the sake of the noble, insofar as it is noble. In its richness it might be regarded as an attractive picture of what moral habituation consists in, particularly as compared with the mechanical picture sketched above.

3.6 THE TEXTS DO NOT MANDATE THE ‘VIRTUOUS MOTIVATION’ VIEW

Despite certain attractive features of Jimenez’ characterisation of the learner’s action, there are a number of concerns to be had about the picture of the learner’s action and habituation that she presents, which I will discuss shortly. Jimenez, however, takes it that this view is demanded by Aristotle’s remarks on moral development throughout *NE II*, and I want first to assess whether Aristotle’s remarks do commit him to the picture of the learner’s action that Jimenez proposes.

Jimenez’ argument in favour of her ‘virtuous motivation’ view begins from the thought that Aristotle, from the early chapters of *NE II*, puts great store in ‘how’ a learner is to act. We have already seen that for Aristotle there is a strong correlation between the kinds of actions performed by learners, and the dispositions that these produce (1103b21-23; 1104b19-21), but Jimenez takes him to be making a stronger claim, namely that *the way in which* the learner performs such actions will determine the kind of disposition that is produced. As evidence of this, she appeals to Aristotle’s remark at the beginning of *II 2*, where he writes that:

We must examine the nature of actions, namely *how they ought to be done*; for these determine also the nature of the dispositions that are produced, as we have said.

ἀναγκαῖον ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰ περὶ τὰς πράξεις, πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς, αὐταὶ γὰρ εἰσι κύριαι καὶ τοῦ ποιᾶς γενέσθαι τὰς ἕξεις, καθάπερ εἰρήκαμεν (1103b29-31).

Aristotle's comments reveal, Jimenez argues, that the practice of superficially similar actions will not be sufficient to produce the desired dispositions; "instead, the actions of the learners need to have certain qualities and it is important to pay attention to how they are done, i.e. they need to be done in the right way" (2016, p.10).

As will become evident in the following chapters, I agree with Jimenez that the way in which a learner performs virtuous actions will importantly determine how successful her habituation is, although as we will see this is for different reasons and in a different way than Jimenez supposes. Even so, it is worth noting that the passage quoted above does not itself provide decisive evidence that, for example, the psychological states of the learner when she acts will importantly determine the success of her habituation.

3.6.1.1 THE 'HOW'

Jimenez takes it that 'πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς' in this passage must refer to the psychological states of the learner, and indeed that is a very natural way in which to read this phrase. But the discussion that follows makes it less clear that this is indeed Aristotle's point. That he follows this remark with a discussion of the uncodifiability of ethics, claiming that matters of conduct have nothing fixed about them and that agents must instead consider the circumstances on any occasion, would seem to suggest instead that Aristotle has in mind at this point a more general question about the *kinds of things* we should do, and what is required for us to get our actions right, than the psychological states of the agent. He continues to argue that when we act we must be neither excessive nor deficient – we must, for example, neither run away from too many things, nor stand firm in all situations – and it might simply be this that he has in mind when he writes 'πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς'. We must act in neither an excessive, nor deficient way.

3.6.1.2 THE 'WELL' – THE SKILLS ANALOGY

Jimenez, however, takes it that there is further evidence that a learner must perform virtuous actions with the correct motivations in Aristotle's analogy with skills at 1103b6-13. There, Aristotle emphasises again that it is from the same causes and on account of the same things that every virtue is created or destroyed, as it is in the case of skills. For, he writes:

it is from playing the lyre that good and bad lyre players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and all the rest; people will become good builders as a result of building *well* and bad builders as a result of building *badly*. For if this were not so there would have been no need of a teacher, but everyone would have been born good or bad.

ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ καθαρίζειν καὶ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ καὶ κακοὶ γίνονται καθαρισταί. ἀνάλογον δὲ καὶ οἰκοδόμοι καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ πάντες: ἐκ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ εὖ οἰκοδομεῖν ἀγαθοὶ οἰκοδόμοι ἔσονται, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ κακῶς κακοί. εἰ γὰρ μὴ οὕτως εἶχεν, οὐδὲν ἂν ἔδει τοῦ διδάξοντος, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἂν ἐγίνοντο ἀγαθοὶ ἢ κακοί.

This passage indicates that key to the formation of virtuous dispositions is that a learner acts well, though Aristotle does not tell us here what practicing actions ‘well’ amounts to in either the case of skills, or the case of virtues. Jimenez, however, drawing presumably on Aristotle’s later remarks in *NE* II 4, takes it that for an action to be performed well, it must be performed with the correct motivation and be accompanied by the correct emotional response. Thus she concludes that “the relevance of the how implies... that learners have to be able to perform well the relevant actions before they have the relevant dispositions” (2016, p11), and this she takes to involve performing those actions with the correct motivation.

Now, I do not want to claim that an agent’s emotional and desiderative states play no role in the success of her habituation; Aristotle’s references to the importance of developing habits of fear and confidence (1103b16-17), the training of our appetites and anger (1103b18), and of course the training in pleasures and pains (II 3), indicate just the opposite. It is clear that successful habituation must involve the training of our emotional and desiderative states. Indeed, I will offer an explanation in Chapter 5 of just why the motivational states of the learner may be important in her successful habituation. But again it is by no means clear that Aristotle’s remarks here commit him to the view that a learner must perform virtuous actions with a virtuous motivation if her habituation is to be at all successful.

Aristotle does not tell us what it is for a learner to perform virtuous actions well, so why is it that Jimenez thinks motive is the determining factor in a learner’s action being well or badly performed? Jimenez takes the skills analogy to show that two learners can perform the *very same action*, and that whether an agent performs this well or badly determines the kind of disposition that is produced. She supposes, then, that in the case of the virtues, if two learners can both perform the *very same action*, but one acts well and another badly, that the action’s being well or badly performed must then be determined by something about the agent’s psychological state. The most plausible candidate, she supposes, is the agent’s motivation.

And yet, again, it is unclear whether at this point in his exposition, in claiming that an action must be performed ‘well’, Aristotle means to say anything about the learner’s psychological states, let alone that the determining factor is the agent’s motivation.

First, let us note that in this passage Aristotle does not in fact say that ‘the successful and unsuccessful learner perform the *very same* actions, but that one performs the action well, the other badly’. Rather, he writes in the second half of the analogy that:

For by acting as we do in our dealings with men, some of us become just, some unjust; by acting as we do in terrifying situations, and accustoming ourselves to fear or to be confident some become brave, some cowardly. Likewise, with regards to things involving appetites and anger: for some become temperate, and mild, others intemperate and irascible, one lot through behaving in one way in these situations, the other by behaving in another way. To sum it up in one phrase: like states come about through like activities.

πράττοντες γὰρ τὰ ἐν τοῖς συναλλάγμασι τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γινόμεθα οἱ μὲν δίκαιοι οἱ δὲ ἄδικοι, πράττοντες δὲ τὰ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς καὶ ἐθιζόμενοι φοβεῖσθαι ἢ θαρρεῖν οἱ μὲν ἀνδρεῖοι οἱ δὲ δειλοί. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχει καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ὀργάς: οἱ μὲν γὰρ σώφρονες καὶ πρᾶοι γίνονται, οἱ δ’ ἀκόλαστοι καὶ ὀργίλοι, οἱ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ οὕτως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀναστρέφεισθαι, οἱ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ οὕτως. καὶ ἐνὶ δὴ λόγῳ ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται (1103b13-22).

And this claim is at best ambiguous. For when Aristotle writes that “what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust”, he could have in mind that two agents can perform *the very same action* (such as repaying a debt), and that by performing that same action with a good motivation, one agent becomes good, whilst the agent who performs it with a bad motivation becomes bad (as Jimenez’ reading requires). But he might also only be claiming here that within the sphere of ‘dealings with other people’, those who perform *the just action*, such as repaying the debt, and so act well, become just, whilst those who perform the unjust action, such as not repaying the debt, and so act badly, become bad; that is, that it is by performing what are in fact different actions, within a given sphere, some become just, and some become unjust.

The latter interpretation is all that the analogy with skills at least establishes. For to say, in the case of the skills that an action was performed well, and another badly, does not always imply that ‘the same’ action was performed, at the level of specificity Jimenez requires for her conclusion in the case of the virtues. The actions of the good and bad lyre player may be considered the same at a certain level of generality, insofar as they are both engaged in lyre playing. But considered in a more fine-grained way, the actions of a good and bad lyre player are precisely *not* the same. Jimenez herself imagines a case in which someone “repeatedly plays with the wrong rhythm, in the wrong tone, with the wrong instrument”, but such action (considered in terms of the physical events or changes that correspond to acts of agency) surely is *not* ‘the same’ as that of the student who plays the *right notes* on the *right instrument*. All the skills analogy shows is that one needs to perform

the right action. If the cases are to be analogous in this passage, the skills example would suggest indeed that he is talking about the need to perform *the right actions* within the relevant sphere.²⁵

Moreover, on the virtue side of the analogy, the fact that Aristotle has chosen to frame the actions in the more general terms of ‘what we do in our dealings with other people’ (πράττοντες γὰρ τὰ ἐν τοῖς συναλλάγμασι τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους), ‘what we do in terrifying situations’ (πράττοντες δὲ τὰ ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς) and ‘in situations involving appetites and anger’ (τὰ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἔχει καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ὀργάς) rather than ‘by doing just actions’ (τὰ δίκαια πράττοντες), ‘by doing brave actions’ (τὰ ἀνδρεία [πράττοντες]) or ‘by doing temperate actions’ (τὰ σώφρονα [πράττοντες]) (as he has done previously) further supports the idea that he wishes to stress the importance of performing the right action, rather than to highlight anything about the learner’s attitude towards such action.

Once again, the point is not that the learner’s emotional and desiderative states play no role in her practice of virtuous actions, and that a learner’s motivation when she acts could not determine the kinds of dispositions that emerge from her practice. The point is that Aristotle’s references to ‘how’ we are to act, and claim that we must act ‘well’ in *NE II 2* do not in themselves establish anything over and above the thought that we must perform the right actions (that is, virtuous actions) if we are to develop the right dispositions.

Moreover, even if we are to suppose that a learner’s acting well does consist in more than merely performing the right actions, it does not follow that the only relevant difference between two learners’ psychological states would consist in their respective motivations. To draw on the discussion of discerning action above – and to anticipate a claim I make in Chapter 5 – it might be that the learner who acts well is one who is attentive to the features of the situation in which she acts, whilst the learner who does not act well acts in a more mechanical or inattentive manner. Motivation is surely not the only difference maker, when it comes to acting well or badly.

3.6.1.3 THE MEAN AND THE ‘RIGHT END’

Jimenez might, however, draw on a second piece of evidence to support the thought that acting well requires that a learner act with a virtuous motive. This evidence can be found in Aristotle’s discussion of the mean in *NE II 9*, which he begins with a summary of the account of the mean established in the previous chapters, listing the requirements for hitting the mean in action and

²⁵ Unless, that is, the two cases are disanalogous in this case. Yet Aristotle doesn’t discuss any disanalogy between the cases until *NE II 4*. In these chapters he appears to be treating the cases as analogous in the relevant respects.

so for performing an action well in any given circumstances. With respect to paying money, or getting angry, say, we must do it towards “the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, *for the right end*, and in the right way... hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy and fine (τὸ δ’ ὧ καὶ ὅσον καὶ ὅτε καὶ οὖν ἔνεκα καὶ ὥς... διόπερ τὸ εὖ καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν)” (1109a28-30). What matters about this passage for Jimenez’ purposes is that:

Aristotle includes the goal, ‘that for the sake of which’ (οὖν ἔνεκα), among the things that the agent should get right if the particular occurrence of anger is to be appropriate or if the action of giving money is going to be well done (2016, p.23).

And yet Aristotle does not tell us here what it is for an agent to act for the right goal, and certainly does not claim that to act in this way requires acting with a virtuous motivation. The stipulation that an action be done for the right goal might only mean here that the action is intentional, or perhaps that the relevant action type is what the agent is aiming at (that she is indeed intending to repay a debt), rather than that she must be acting from a particular set of values. Jimenez supposes that Aristotle must have in mind ‘acting for the sake of the noble’ when he writes ‘οὖν ἔνεκα’ here, since in Books III and IV he writes that the virtuous agent acts for the sake of the noble (τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα)” (1120a23). And yet in the discussion of the voluntary in Book III Aristotle specifies ‘ἔνεκα τίνος’ as one of the particulars an agent must know in order to act voluntarily, and offers ‘safety’ (σωτηρίας) as an example of such an end. In claiming that mean action requires that an agent act for a certain end, Aristotle may have in mind only that she must know what action type she is performing and perhaps what will result from her action. If so, this passage lends textual support not to the claim that a learner must act with the right motives, but to the thought discussed above that a learner must be aware of what she is doing, and not act mindlessly.²⁶

²⁶ Jimenez does concede such a possibility, and writes:

A child, thus, can do a generous action like sharing her sandwich while aiming simply at the goal of sharing her sandwich independently of whether it is a noble action or not; for example, she can aim at sharing her sandwich because the action is pleasant (for example, if she does not really like her sandwich), or because it brings some gain (for example, if she gets some reward for her behavior). I suspect, however, that in these cases, someone who insists that the goal of the child is simply the action of sharing the sandwich disregards the fact that the child’s ultimate goal is not the action itself but pleasure or gain. Now, whatever Aristotle means when he says that one should aim at getting the goal right if one is to find the intermediate in action, I think we can rule out that pleasure or gain are the goals he has in mind (2016, p.23).

But children can also perform actions because they are obedient, because they want to be good, or because they value being praised, and it is not so obvious that such motives could not be ones from which virtuous motives develop.

3.6.1.4 GOOD PRACTICE

Moreover, even if we were to assume that Aristotle would grant that the motivational state of the learner does in some sense contribute to the quality of the action she performs and so the dispositions that are produced, it is not clear that Aristotle should be committed to the far stronger claim that for an action to be performed well *by a learner* requires that the learner perform it with the same motivation as a virtuous agent. *Eupraxia* of course, requires that an agent performs virtuous actions for their own sake. But why suppose that the standard by which we assess the actions of mature agents is the same standard by which we should assess the practice of (frequently young) learners? This is not to espouse the kind of agent relativism criticised by Brown (1997), which takes Aristotle's mean in feeling and action to vary according to one's moral progress. For one thing, the claim is not that the learner in *practising* well has achieved *eupraxia*.²⁷ The claim, rather, is that what is required for *good practice* need not be the same as the requirement for *good action simpliciter*.²⁸

Jimenez, I take it, is in part driven by the intuition that if a learner repeatedly performed virtuous actions from a *selfish* motive, it is difficult to see how such practice could contribute to the formation of virtuous dispositions. I will return to this case in Chapter 5 (§5.6) and show how the account I develop there can accommodate this intuition. But even if we agree with Jimenez that it would indeed be difficult to see how, in such a case, a learner's practice could contribute to the formation of virtuous dispositions, why again suppose that what is required is that a learner perform virtuous actions with *virtuous* motives. Might it not be the case that a learner could count as practising well if she performed virtuous actions open-mindedly, or obediently, rather than stubbornly, say, and might this moreover be the kind of state from which it would be possible to develop the motivations characteristic of the virtuous agent?

3.7 LEAVING ROOM FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DISCOVERY

I have argued so far that Aristotle's remarks on how an agent must act in *NE II* do not mandate, at least, that we adopt Jimenez' view of the learner's action, which requires that a learner both can

²⁷ Nor indeed is it the case that to claim that a learner practises well without performing actions in precisely the same way as the virtuous agent entails denying that what it is for human beings to do well is to act virtuously.

²⁸ As Brown puts it: "More is expected of the fully developed moral agent (the Milo type) than of the beginner in moral training; what is best and right for the expert may not be right for the beginner" (1997, p.82) and this she claims is both true and would be granted by Aristotle.] It is by no means clear that Aristotle makes it a requirement of successful practice that a learner act with the same motive as a virtuous agent.

and must act with virtuous motives, at least on occasion, if her habituation is to be successful. There may, however, be reasons beyond Aristotle's remarks on the habituation process itself for supposing that we need to assume this sort of continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent if we are going to be at all successful in explaining how the one develops into the other. Jimenez herself claims that what makes motivationally neutral views of the learner's action problematic is the putative moral upbringing gap that they introduce. Must we then adopt Jimenez' picture of the learner's action if we are to have any hope of explaining how the practice of virtuous actions contributes to our virtuous agency and the realisation of virtuous activity?

Jimenez is right, I believe, to be concerned by accounts of the learner's action that leave unaccounted for the development of capacities that are distinctive of the virtuous agent and crucially exercised in virtuous activity. She is no doubt right, too, to suggest that it is overly restrictive, and not mandated by the text, to claim that only a virtuous agent can act for the sake of the noble (2016, p.26). And yet, as I noted at the end of §3.6.1.4, it is not clear that we need to stipulate that a learner can on occasion act for the sake of the noble if she is to practice well, nor indeed is it clear that this stipulation helps us to make progress in our explanatory endeavour.

3.7.1 THE BUMP IN THE CARPET

Beyond the thought that the texts do not mandate the view Jimenez proposes, my first major source of dissatisfaction with her view is that to claim that the learner can and must act for the sake of the noble is simply to posit one of the things that needs to be explained. We are trying, amongst other things, to explain how a learner develops the motivational disposition of a virtuous agent, and Jimenez' argument is that the development of this disposition can only be made intelligible if a learner can perform such actions for the sake of the noble. In doing so she is not claiming "that the motives of learners can be strictly the same in all possible senses as the motives of virtuous people—since virtuous people have *phronēsis*, their motives will have a complexity that cannot be present in the case of non-virtuous agents" (2016, p.26). Yet still, she does claim that:

the motives of learners can be virtuous in the relevant sense that the central concern of the agents is the nobility of their actions and not the consequential advantages or disadvantages they will get from performing them—i.e. they are not motivated by the pleasure or the gain that they will derive from a particular action, but by the fact that it is the noble thing to do in the circumstances (2016, p.26).

And yet this only moves the explanatory bump in the carpet. For surely one of the things we are trying to account for is how a learner comes to acquire what are characteristically *virtuous* motives, and how indeed it is that a learner comes to perform virtuous actions for their nobility?

Aristotle is clear that our initial source of motivation is not the nobility of acting in certain ways, but rather pleasure. Aristotle discusses the roles of pleasure and pain in virtue and action in *NE* II 3, and insists on the importance of training our sense of pleasure from early youth:

for it is on account of pleasure that we do base things, and on account of pain that we abstain from fine things. That is why we need to have had the appropriate upbringing – right from early youth, as Plato says – to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is correct education.

διὰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν ἡδονὴν τὰ φαῦλα πράττομεν, διὰ δὲ τὴν λύπην τῶν καλῶν ἀπεχόμεθα. διὸ δεῖ ἤχθαι πῶς εὐθὺς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησὶν, ὥστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ: ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν (1104b9-13).²⁹

Later in the passage, he explains further that:

Pleasure grows up with us from infancy on. That is why it is hard to rub out this feeling that is dyed into our lives. We also estimate actions [as well as feelings] – some of us more, some less – by pleasure and pain.

ἔτι δ' ἐκ νηπίου πᾶσιν ἡμῖν συντέθηται: διὸ χαλεπὸν ἀποτριψασθαι τοῦτο τὸ πάθος ἐγκεχρωμένον τῷ βίῳ. κανονίζομεν δὲ καὶ τὰς πράξεις, οἱ μὲν μᾶλλον οἱ δ' ἥττον, ἡδονῆ καὶ λύπῃ (1105a1-5).

Aristotle takes it to be an empirical fact that we begin our lives motivated by pleasure, and that it is an achievement of mature agents that they act not simply for the sake of pleasure, but can act because they recognise a certain value in certain forms of action that goes beyond any immediate pleasure that they may gain.³⁰ Part of our moral development consists in the transformation of our desires and motivational states, and this is precisely one of the things which an account of our development through the practice of virtuous actions must attempt to explain. We need, indeed, to explain how the learner comes to grasp the value of virtuous action that is grasped by the

²⁹ See also *X* 9:

The many, especially the young, do not find it pleasant to live in a temperate and resistant way. This is why laws must prescribe their upbringing and practices; for they will not find these things painful when they get used to them (τὸ γὰρ σωφρόνως καὶ καρτερικῶς ζῆν οὐχ ἡδὺ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέοις, διὸ νόμοις δεῖ τετάχθαι τὴν τροφήν καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα: οὐκ ἔσται γὰρ λυπηρὰ συνήθη γενόμενα) (1179b29-35).

³⁰ This is not to claim that a mature agent is not motivated by pleasure in any way – the passages just quoted make clear that pleasure cannot be eradicated as a source of motivation, and his discussion in *NE* II 3 makes clear that a virtuous agent takes pleasure in the virtuous actions they perform. This indeed is one of the insights of Burnyeat's discussion, noted at the outset of this chapter.

virtuous agent. The demand for continuity might lead us to overlook the fact that a certain development and transformation essentially takes place, and that this is something that needs to be explained.³¹

3.7.2 THE PICTURE OF HABITUATION

My second source of dissatisfaction with Jimenez' demand for strong continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent, and her proposed picture of the learner's action, has to do with the picture of habituation and of what happens in the course of the learner's practice of virtuous action that I think implicitly underpins these demands.

At the end of the previous section I suggested that Jimenez may be motivated by the intuition that it will be nearly impossible for a learner to develop virtuous dispositions if she performs virtuous actions only with vicious motives. I suggested that even if we share this intuition, we might still wish to maintain that actions performed willingly, say, though not for the sake of the noble, could still result in the development of virtuous dispositions. But Jimenez does not consider such a possibility. Instead she insists that the learner's virtuous actions *must* be performed for the sake of the noble if her habituation is to be successful, and this I submit is revealing.

It suggests, first, that for Jimenez only the moments when a learner acts with a virtuous motive will contribute to her successful development. And second, it suggests that, on her view, what is effected in the course of the learner's practice is that such motives and ways of acting become more regular, and to that extent more entrenched.³² The power of habituation, then, would seem to lie in making more entrenched, through repetition, aspects of a subject's psychology that previously were not so entrenched. What is most important about performing virtuous actions is that this is something repeated, and that however the learner acts gets established as a habit.³³

Now, on the one hand we might think that this is exactly what happens when we practice virtuous actions. As we are by now more than aware, the moral virtues come about 'from habit', and *NE II 4* makes very clear that by practicing virtuous actions *many times*, a firm and unchanging state is established (1105a33-b5). Aristotle, indeed, is all but explicit in claiming that

³¹ Moreover, how is it that a learner comes to grasp that virtuous action is noble?

³² There is a question, of course, as to why it is *these* moments that 'stick' and these ways of acting that become more entrenched, and not those in which a learner acts with a different motivation.

³³ Just as if a learner repeatedly performs certain actions, they will develop the habit of performing such actions, and perform them more and more regularly (as the mechanical view maintains), so too if a learner repeatedly performs virtuous actions from a virtuous motive, they will develop the habit of performing actions with that motive, and do so more and more regularly

the practice of virtuous actions establishes a ‘second nature’, where the analogy with nature is intended to pick out the sense that what gets established is something law-like and deep-rooted:

For habit is easier than nature to change. Indeed, the reason why habit is also difficult to change is that it is like nature; as Euenus says:

Habit, I say, is long time practice my friend,
and in the end training is nature for men.

ῥᾶον γὰρ ἔθος μετακινήσαι φύσεως: διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ ἔθος χαλεπὸν, ὅτι τῇ φύσει ἔοικεν,
ὡσπερ καὶ Εὐηνὸς λέγει
πολυχρόνιον μελέτην ἔμεναι, φίλε, καὶ δὴ
ταύτην ἀνθρώποισι τελευτῶσαν φύσιν εἶναι (1152a30-33).

Certainly, then, part of what happens through the practice of virtuous actions is that such action, and certain ways of being motivated, patterns of feeling, and so forth, become second nature.

But we need to be careful. Certain of Jimenez’ remarks suggest that she takes the stability condition to be, in effect, a second order condition;³⁴ a condition which refers to the agent’s disposition to choose virtuous actions for their own sake, as if we should suppose that a learner could come to meet the knowledge and choice conditions, and that what is then required is for her knowledge and choice of virtuous action to become something stable.³⁵ But it is not clear that the stability condition is second order in this way, or something that follows upon the agent’s achievement of the other two conditions (or indeed that the conditions could be met in stages). Although Aristotle does not make explicit what the stability condition amounts to, it is highly plausible to suppose that he is referring to the state which comprises the agent’s desires, perceptions, emotions, pleasures and pains (and perhaps even beliefs), and that he is suggesting that through the gradual transformation of these various capacities, the agent achieves what can be described as a firm and unchanging state. Indeed, if we understand the stability condition in this way, it is not clear that this is something that would come *after* the agent’s achievement of the knowledge and choice conditions; rather, we might think that it is through the development of these various capacities that all three conditions are fully and simultaneously met.

³⁴ “[Non-virtuous agents] can aim at noble goals for their own sake, even if this aiming might be occasional and lack the reliability and firmness that the possession of virtue confers” (2016, p.26).

³⁵ It is slightly odd to think of stability as something that could be added to knowledge, since we might reasonably suppose that Aristotle would count stability as a feature of knowledge. It is for this reason, then, I take it that commentators such as Jimenez talk specifically of the stability of the agent’s motive. E.g. “they can aim at noble goals for their own sake even if this aiming might be occasional and lack the reliability and firmness that the possession of virtue confers” (2016, p.26).

This brings us to the second reason for caution when conceiving of habituation as making more entrenched certain ways of acting and responding that were occasional or unreliable to begin with. For to see this as all that is effected by habituation (and to think, in particular, that only the moments when a learner acts (almost) as the virtuous agent does are those that contribute to her successful habituation),³⁶ is to overlook the thought that there might be something that is discovered, something that the learner learns when she performs virtuous actions, and that more moments contribute to the learner's successful development than just those in which she gets things right, motivationally speaking.³⁷

Aristotle tells us in *NE* II 4 that “we achieve [the conditions of virtuously performed action] from doing just and temperate things many times (ἄπερ ἐκ τοῦ πολλάκις πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα περιγίνεται” (1105b4-5). The practice of virtuous actions does not merely effect a certain stability in the agent, but a motivational state as well. And importantly, this remark suggests that it is *by* engaging in certain forms of action that we come to desire and to choose such action for its own sake. There is, his remarks suggest, something that is learned and a value that is grasped that only comes about through so acting; action, it seems, affords discovery, and can transform our motivations and desiderative states.

Thus even if we were to grant that at some stage in her development a learner could perform virtuous actions for the sake of the noble, it remains a task to explain how it is that a learner comes to be so motivated in the first place, and to choose virtuous actions for the sake of their nobility. And moreover, we need to explain what it is that happens when a learner performs these actions that results in this transformation. In the following three chapters I will develop an account of the learner's action, which allows for the kind of continuity required to make her development intelligible, whilst also maintaining an important distinction between her action and that of the virtuous agent, allowing for the possibility of change and development in the course of her practice. Furthermore, I will show that there is something that a learner discovers in the course of her practice, and thus show what it is about acting that transforms her psychological states.

³⁶ We might imagine this model as analogous to hammering a nail: we need to get the hammer and nail in the right position, and our hammering is successful every time we hit the nail in the right place.

³⁷ Moreover, if the learner makes progress only when she acts with a virtuous motivation, this excludes the idea that we might make progress through our mistakes, and through coming to recognise these. We might think, instead, that getting things wrong, not least with regards to motivation, is a way in which we make moral progress. In recognising that on past occasions I acted with X motive, rather than virtuous motive Y, I can recognise that there was something wrong about my initial motive, that I had not seen the value in a particular action, for example, that I now realise is there to be grasped, and so on.

4 IMITATING VIRTUE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We established in Chapter 2 that the virtuous agent is an author of her actions in a very strict sense: she not only acts knowingly, but in choosing virtuous actions for their own sake, and doing so from a stable state, her action can be seen to issue from, and to reflect, her settled values and a distinctive way of seeing things. Aristotle's remarks in *NE* II 4 reveal moreover that this kind of activity has a certain conceptual priority in Aristotle's account of moral action. I argued that in thinking about just action, Aristotle is encouraging us to begin by thinking about the mature agent, who performs actions from the specific psychological state just described. Such action is paradigmatic and conceptually prior to action which is seen as divorced from an agent's settled way of seeing and valuing things, and of which the agent's psychological states are variously determinable. The latter is posterior in account to action that is authored in the strict sense. Developmentally, however, the positions are reversed: a learner, it seems, starts from action that is alienable, and may act in a variety of psychologically determinable ways, but through repeated practice develops the knowledge, disposition to choose and the stability of character that characterises a virtuous agent, thus becoming an author in the full sense of virtuous actions.

The difficult task is to explain just how this kind of change occurs – how it is, that is, that a learner moves from practising actions that in a sense are not strictly her own, to being the author of her actions in the strict sense described. In accounting for this change, we are required to answer at least two questions: we need to explain, first, how it is that a learner not only comes to have knowledge of virtuous action, but how she comes to grasp the value of such action, and so eventually to choose it for its own sake. Second we must explain what it is about *doing* just and temperate things that effects this transformation, as Aristotle indicates is the case.

In the previous chapter we surveyed a number of attempts that have been made to find continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent, with the hope of making the learner's development intelligible. We took note in particular of a recent suggestion that only by granting that a learner does, on occasion, act for the sake of the noble, can we explain the

development of virtuous motives as we are required to do. But I argued that this picture merely takes for granted one of the features of the learner's transformation for which we are trying to account. Not only that, but in so doing it obscures Aristotle's insight that the transformation of the agent's motivation is effected *by* the doing of just and temperate things. Merely stipulating this kind of strong continuity between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent does not help us to make progress in our explanatory endeavour. So how then is progress to be made?

Perhaps somewhat ironically, I believe that the explanatory challenge as I have framed it in fact offers a way of understanding the learner's action that may help us to explain her progress. For the contrast that I have emphasised between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent allows us to see the student of virtue as engaged, in effect, in a form of imitation. And I suggest that by taking seriously the imitative nature of the learner's activity, we can make progress in understanding how a learner's alienable action could over time develop into the virtuous agency and strict authorship of virtuous action in which mature virtuous activity consists.

4.2 IMITATION AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

In developing the thought that by taking seriously the imitative nature of the learner's action we can make progress towards an account of how virtuous agency develops, I want first to reflect a little further on the reasons we may have for regarding the learner and her activity in this way. Aristotle himself does not make any explicit statement to this effect, but I suggest that his remarks in *NE* II 4, and elsewhere in the *Ethics*, do allow for the thought that a learner is engaged in the imitation of a virtuous agent; a thought, moreover, that becomes increasingly plausible when we acknowledge the important status that had already been granted to the concept of imitation in moral development in the writings of Aristotle's immediate predecessors. Having thus motivated the idea that seeing the student's action as imitative offers a fruitful way of understanding her development, we will then consider in more detail how this might work.

We saw in Chapter 2 that Aristotle in *NE* II 4 points to the way in which actions, considered in terms of deeds done, are in an important sense alienable, and that virtuous actions, whilst characteristic of a virtuous agent, can nevertheless be performed by an agent who is not herself virtuous. As such, it is possible that a virtuous agent can be impersonated, through action, by one who is not virtuous. This, of course, is something to which Aristotle is very much alive, and to which he calls our attention when he writes in Book 3 of the rash man who:

Seems to be a boaster, and a pretender to bravery. At any rate, the attitude towards frightening things that the virtuous person really has is the attitude that the rash person wants to appear to have and hence he imitates the brave person where he can.

δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ ἀλαζῶν εἶναι ὁ θρασὺς καὶ προσποιητικὸς ἀνδρείας: ὡς γοῦν ἐκεῖνος περὶ τὰ φοβερὰ ἔχει, οὗτος βούλεται φαίνεσθαι: ἐν οἷς οὖν δύναται, μιμείται (1115b28-32).¹

The rash man is not brave, but can make himself appear like the courageous person by imitating his actions.² Indeed, it is thanks to the fact that actions can serve as ‘signs’ of virtue that virtue and character can be portrayed in drama.

But Aristotle’s discussion in *NE* II 4 and in particular his claim that “things are called just and temperate, when they are such as the just and temperate person would do (τὰ μὲν οὖν πράγματα δίκαια καὶ σώφρονα λέγεται, ὅταν ἢ τοιαῦτα οἷα ἂν ὁ δίκαιος ἢ ὁ σώφρων πράξειεν)” (1105b5-7), can be taken as pointing towards a deeper thought. It indicates not simply that just and temperate actions are characteristic of the virtuous agent but, as I have argued, points to a certain conceptual priority that the virtuous agent and her activity have in our thinking about just and temperate actions. The virtuous agent’s properly authored action – action with a specific psychological component – is paradigmatic, and to this extent we might thus conceive of the derivative and alienable action that a learner can perform as an imitation of virtuous activity proper. Indeed, whilst the actions that a learner performs have the quality of being virtuous, it remains that they belong, properly speaking, to the virtuous agent; a thought that chimes with Woodruff’s remark that “a product of *mimēsis* is a thing in its own right, but is also *of* something else” (1992, p.84).

As we will soon see, the concept of imitation is one which may be used in a variety of ways. Thus far, one might take the mimetic relation I have posited between the actions of a learner and the activity of the virtuous agent to be something like the relation that Plato is thought to posit between sensibles and forms, where the latter too are understood as paradigmatic.³ The relation

¹ For another negative picture of imitative activity, see Aristotle’s discussion of those who imitate, but fail to be like, the great-souled man:

being unable to bear [their prosperity], and thinking themselves superior to everyone else, they look down on them, even though they act in no better way than anyone else. For they imitate the great-souled man without really being like him, and do this in what they can: they don’t act in accordance with virtue, but they do look down on others (οὐ δυνάμενοι δὲ φέρειν καὶ οἰόμενοι τῶν ἄλλων ὑπερέχειν ἐκείνων μὲν καταφρονοῦσιν, αὐτοὶ δ’ ὅ τι ἂν τύχῃσι πράττουσιν. μιμοῦνται γὰρ τὸν μεγαλόψυχον οὐχ ὅμοιοι ὄντες, τοῦτο δὲ δρῶσιν ἐν οἷς δύναται: τὰ μὲν οὖν κατ’ ἀρετὴν οὐ πράττουσι, καταφρονοῦσι δὲ τῶν ἄλλων) (112.4a31-b5).

² For a discussion of the deceptive sense of the concept of *mimēsis*, see Woodruff (1992, esp. p.83-88).

³ *Republic* X might be thought to suggest that sensibles stand in a mimetic relation to the Forms (597bff), though only the painter is explicitly referred to as an imitator in this discussion. In *Timaeus* (38aff) constructed time is said to imitate eternity.

that Plato posits between these is, of course, a source of much contention, but typically scholars find evidence for understanding the relation in one of two ways. On the one hand, one might suppose the relation to be one of resemblance (*Phd.* 74aff; *Parm.* 129aff), and on the other, a relation of deficiency (*Phd.* 74d, 75b; *Symp.* 211aff). One might thus think that in claiming that the learner's actions stand in a mimetic relation to those of the virtuous agent, I am then claiming either that the learner's actions resemble the virtuous agent's actions, which are paradigms, or else that they are deficient in some respect to these paradigms. Certainly, as we have seen already, there is at the very least a resemblance between the action of a learner and that of a virtuous agent, and moreover, in so far as a learner does not achieve *eupraxia*, we might see her action as deficient with respect to that of the virtuous agent.

But these are not the primary senses of imitation I have in mind when I claim that we can see the learner's action as an imitation of the virtuous agent's activity. For the fact that Aristotle alludes to the conceptual priority and paradigmatic nature of the virtuous agent's action in the course of explaining what it is that a learner does and how virtue is developed, invites us to think of imitation as something in which the learner herself is engaged. The virtuous agent and her activity serve as a paradigm, a model, *for* the learner, and thus I submit that we should not merely see the learner's actions as standing in either a resemblance and/or deficiency relation to those of a virtuous agent, but rather suppose that when a learner performs virtuous actions, she will be actively imitating a virtuous agent and her mature virtuous activity.

That the learner's action is in some respect imitative is recognised by a number of commentators, including Sherman (1989, p.168ff), Broadie, (1994, p.82), Lovibond (1996, p.81), Price (2000, p.77), Fossheim (2006), Lawrence (2011, p.252) and Kraut (2012, p.537). Kosman too notices that:

the assumption of virtue, by itself a mere act, is, when repeated, the instrument by which virtue is produced: “ek tou pollakis prattein ta dikaia kai sōphrona [hai aretai] periginetai – [virtue] comes about through repeated just and moderate actions.” Virtue, in other words, is itself shaped by the impersonation of the virtuous (1992, p.62).

But this is not a thought that is new in Aristotle; that imitation is not only a means by which agents can make themselves *appear like* a virtuous agent, but a means by which a learner can *become* virtuous is a thought that is voiced by a number of thinkers prior to Aristotle. I want, then, briefly to survey a number of sources which attest to the power of imitation in moral development in the tradition prior to Aristotle, both to motivate the thought that this is something familiar to him, and to gain a little more insight into the thought that we might develop through imitation.

4.2.1 IMITATION AND DEVELOPMENT BEFORE ARISTOTLE

Kosman draws attention to the following quotation from Xenophon, who in discussing the charges brought against Socrates asks:

How could he, being such as he is, have made others either impious or lawless or gluttonous or sexually intemperate or work-shy? Rather, he kept them from these things, making them all desire virtue and allowing them to expect that if they took care of themselves, they would become fine and good people. Indeed, he never professed to be a teacher of this, but by being manifestly of this sort, he made his followers hope that by imitating him, they will become like him.

πῶς οὖν αὐτὸς ὢν τοιοῦτος ἄλλους ἂν ἢ ἀσεβεῖς ἢ παρανόμους ἢ λίχνους ἢ ἀφροδισίων ἀκρατεῖς ἢ πρὸς τὸ πονεῖν μαλακοὺς ἐποίησεν; ἀλλ' ἔπαυσε μὲν τούτων πολλοὺς ἀρετῆς ποιήσας ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ ἐλπίδας παρασχών, ἂν ἑαυτῶν ἐπιμελῶνται, καλοὺς κἀγαθοὺς ἔσεσθαι: καίτοι γε οὐδεπώποτε ὑπέσχετο διδάσκαλος εἶναι τούτου, ἀλλὰ τῷ φανερὸς εἶναι τοιοῦτος ὢν ἐλπίζειν ἐποίει τοὺς συνδιατρίβοντας ἑαυτῷ μιμουμένους ἐκείνον τοιούτους γενήσεσθαι (*Memorabilia* I.ii.2-3).

The importance of imitation is stressed again later in the work, when Socrates himself is asked how those civilisations who have lost their old virtue can regain it. Socrates answers that:

“It doesn't seem mysterious to me. If they discover the customs of their ancestors and practise them in no lesser way than they did, they will become as good as they were; or if not, they [should] imitate those who are now pre-eminent and practise their customs, and if they observe them likewise, they will be as good as they, and, if they are more careful [in observing them] even better.”

“οὐδὲν ἀπόκρυφον δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι, ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἐξευρόντες τὰ τῶν προγόνων ἐπιτηδεύματα μηδὲν χείρον ἐκείνων ἐπιτηδεύοιεν, οὐδὲν ἂν χείρους ἐκείνων γενέσθαι: εἰ δὲ μὴ, τοὺς γε νῦν πρωτεύοντας μιμούμενοι καὶ τούτοις τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπιτηδεύοντες, ὁμοίως μὲν τοῖς αὐτοῖς χρώμενοι οὐδὲν ἂν χείρους ἐκείνων εἶεν, εἰ δ' ἐπιμελέστερον, καὶ βελτίους” (*Memorabilia*, III.v.14).

These quotations are helpful in a number of ways. They not only explicitly point to imitation as a means by which virtue can be acquired, but also offer us a number of important details about this process. In the first passage, for example, we see that Socrates, as a person of good character, does not strictly teach virtue – at least not in the sense that Protagoras or Gorgias claimed to do – but rather that he provides a model of it that his followers can imitate. Moreover, it is *he*, Socrates, that they imitate; the implicit suggestion here is that one becomes good by imitating a good *person* (or agent), a thought to which we will return. In terms of Socrates' followers – the would be imitators of virtue – we learn not simply that they can hope to acquire virtue by imitating Socrates, but specifically that through his example they should be brought to desire virtue (ἀρετῆς ποιήσας ἐπιθυμεῖν); a thought that is especially important in light of the particular explanatory challenge we face.

Elsewhere, in the *Agesilaus*, Xenophon writes that:

If line and rule are a fine discovery of men for good work, I think that the virtue of Agesilaus may become a fine example for those to follow who wish to practise bravery. For which man that imitates a pious man would become impious, a just man unjust, a temperate man wanton, a self-controlled man *akratic*? Indeed, Agesilaus prided himself less on reigning over others than on ruling himself, less on leading the people against their enemies than on guiding them to the whole of virtue.

εἰ δὲ καλὸν εὖρημα ἀνθρώποις στάθμη καὶ κανὼν πρὸς τὸ ὀρθὰ ἐργάζεσθαι, καλὸν ἄν μοι δοκεῖ ἢ Ἀγησιλάου ἀρετὴ παράδειγμα γενέσθαι τοῖς ἀνδραγαθίαν ἀσκεῖν βουλομένοις. τίς γὰρ ἂν ἢ θεοσεβῆ μιμούμενος ἀνόσιος γένοιτο ἢ δίκαιον ἄδικος ἢ σώφρονα ὑβριστὴς ἢ ἐγκρατῆ ἀκρατής; καὶ γὰρ δὴ οὐχ οὕτως ἐπὶ τῷ ἄλλων βασιλεύειν ὡς ἐπὶ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ ἄρχειν ἐμεγαλύνετο, οὐδ' ἐπὶ τῷ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους ἄλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἠγεῖσθαι τοῖς πολίταις (*Agesilaus* X.2).

This passage once again attests not only to the power of imitation in producing virtue, but to the virtuous agent's role as a model (παράδειγμα) for others, guiding (ἠγεῖσθαι) them towards virtue, rather than ruling or instructing.

Perhaps the most famous acknowledgement of the power of imitation in shaping our moral development, however, is to be found in Plato, who in recognising the power of imitation to influence a subject's development in one way or another, goes as far as to prohibit certain forms of imitation in the ideal city of the *Republic*. One of Plato's most explicit treatments of the power of imitation, in particular with respect to the development of the young, can be found in his discussion of the young Guardians' education in *Republic* III, where he has Socrates argue that:

If [the young guardians] imitate anything, they must imitate right from childhood what is appropriate for them – that is to say, people who are courageous, temperate, pious, free, and everything of that sort. On the other hand, they must not be clever at doing or imitating illiberal or shameful actions, so that they won't enjoy the real thing from imitating it. Or haven't you noticed that imitations, if they are practised much past youth, get established in the habits and nature of body, speech and mind?

ἐὰν δὲ μιμῶνται, μιμῆσθαι τὰ τούτοις προσήκοντα εὐθύς ἐκ παίδων, ἀνδρείους, σώφρονας, ὀσίους, ἐλευθέρους, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα, τὰ δὲ ἀνελεύθερα μήτε ποιεῖν μήτε δεινούς εἶναι μιμήσασθαι, μηδὲ ἄλλο μηδὲν τῶν αἰσχροῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἐκ τῆς μιμήσεως τοῦ εἶναι ἀπολαύσωσιν. ἢ οὐκ ἤσθησαι ὅτι αἱ μιμήσεις, ἐὰν ἐκ νέων πόρρω διατελέσωσιν, εἰς ἔθνη τε καὶ φύσιν καθίστανται καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ φωνὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν; (*Rep.* 395c3-d3).⁴

⁴ For another instance of the potentially corrupting power of imitation, see for example Isocrates:

If, then, you will listen to me, you will preferably not deal in future with such base subjects, but if that cannot be, you will seek to speak of such things as will neither injure your own reputation, nor corrupt your imitators, nor bring the teaching of rhetoric into disrepute (Ἦν οὖν ἐμοὶ πείθη, μάλιστα μὲν οὐ ποιήσει τοῦ λοιποῦ πονηρὰς ὑποθέσεις, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τοιαῦτα ζητήσεις λέγειν ἐξ ὧν μὴτ' αὐτὸς χεῖρων εἶναι δόξεις μήτε τοὺς μιμουμένους λυμανεῖ μήτε τὴν περὶ τοὺς λόγους παιδευσιν διαβαλεῖς. Καὶ μὴ θαυμάσης, εἰ νεώτερος ὢν καὶ μηδὲν σοὶ) (*Busiris*, §49, trans. Van Hook).

A word of caution is required in approaching this passage. The topic of discussion at this point in *Republic* 3 is *'lexis'*; it is concerned, that is, with the activity of speaking. Having completed their discussion of the kind of content that will be permitted in stories within the ideal city, the interlocutors then move on to discuss the way in which stories are presented, or, perhaps more accurately, the way in which the speaker presents himself in telling such stories. He may, on the one hand, narrate the story, presenting himself as himself whilst telling the story of another, but he may also tell the story in an imitative mode, speaking as a character in the story, by adjusting his voice, and so on (see esp. 397a). This impersonatory sense of *mimēsis* would appear to consist in imitation through voice, and is in this respect different to what we might think of as the more behavioural or enactive sense that is implied in the Xenophon passages and in which I am suggesting we should see Aristotle's learner as engaged.

Nevertheless, the passage attests to our susceptibility through *mimēsis* to taking on the persona of another, and indeed reveals just how thoroughgoing this can be, for imitations practised long past youth become established in the 'habits and nature' of 'body, speech and mind'. The passage points, moreover, to the important fact that imitation is something that can be practised right from youth, chiming with the thought, stressed by both Plato and Aristotle, that moral habituation is something that must start from the earliest age (e.g. *Rep* 401e; *NE* 1104b12). Indeed, it is a thought that is made explicit by Aristotle in the *Poetics* when he writes "it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to imitate (τό τε γὰρ μιμῆσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστὶ" (144b5); a passage to which we will return shortly.

In the *Republic* passage, as in Xenophon, we learn that through the imitation of a thing agents can come enjoy (ἀπολαύσωσιν) that thing, pointing once again to the power of imitation to transform a subject's desires. In this passage, however, we are offered an additional piece of information about imitation, namely that it is something at which people can be 'clever' (δεινούς). The allusion in this passage to 'cleverness' at imitating may of course be intended as a point specifically about an agent's ability to sound like another, but it is worth reflecting on the thought that imitating is something at which one can be better or worse, and that the better one imitates, the more power this has.⁵

These passages, then, attest to a recognition in the writings of Aristotle's immediate predecessors of the power of imitation to affect an agent's moral development; a recognition of

⁵ This becomes especially important if taken in connection with Aristotle's insistence in *NE* II 1 that by practising *well* we become good people.

which he must have almost certainly been aware. It is plausible to suppose then that Aristotle may have something like these pictures in mind when discussing the learner's development through the practice of virtuous actions in the early chapters of Book II.⁶

4.2.2 IMITATION AND CHARACTER MODELS IN *NE* IX AND X

A challenge to this interpretation of Aristotle's account of moral habituation – that is, as involving imitation – that must be acknowledged at the outset is that Aristotle nowhere makes this thought explicit. Still, as we established at the outset of this thesis, any elaboration of Aristotle's otherwise compressed remarks on moral habituation will require a degree of speculative supplementation. Moreover, as I have already explained, I believe that Aristotle's remarks in *NE* II 4 are intended to encourage us towards thinking of the learner's action in this way. And whilst the importance of imitation in a learner's development is not a thought that is made explicit in the early chapters of Book II, I suggest there is evidence that Aristotle acknowledges the importance of imitation with respect to the development of one's character elsewhere in the text. We can review this evidence before proceeding to consider just how imitation might play a role in the development of virtuous agency and realisation of virtuous activity.

The importance of imitation and specifically of imitating virtuous agents is alluded to in a number of places later in the *Ethics*, specifically, in the discussion of friendship in Book IX and at the very end of the work in Book X when Aristotle discusses the role of the community in shaping the characters of the young. The emphasis of Book II, I submit, is on the importance of a learner's own practice of virtuous actions, as opposed to her merely listening to arguments, say, and for this reason the role that imitation plays in the development of virtue and the importance of virtuous models is not emphasised here. But that the importance of imitation and virtuous guidance should emerge later in the work, when the focus turns to the role of other people in leading and coming to lead a good life, is not surprising.⁷

Having discussed in Book VIII and the first half of IX various issues surrounding the topic of friendship, Aristotle pauses to take note of a particular dispute that surrounds the question of friendship's value, for it is said by some that blessedly happy and self-sufficient people have no need of friends (1169b3-6). Aristotle responds that it would be absurd to award the happy person

⁶ Particularly given his explicit allusion to Plato's account of moral development in *NE* II 3.

⁷ Indeed, I will suggest that the collaborative nature of the activities discussed in Book IX is especially important with regards to explaining how a learner comes to be in a position to grasp the things that she does.

all the goods without giving him friends, for having friends seems to be the greatest external good (1169b10), and man moreover is a political animal, who tends by nature to live with others (1169b18-21). Aristotle adds a number of positive reasons for maintaining that a happy life must be one lived amongst friends, arguing that a virtuous friend provides a virtuous agent with opportunities to observe virtuous activity, which she will find pleasant. But he adds too that the lives of good people lived together allows for the cultivation of virtue (1170a11-12). What immediately follows is Aristotle's enigmatic discussion of 'perceiving together', but at the end of the book Aristotle remarks that:

And so it comes about that the friendship of bad people is wretched. (For they share bad things and are unstable, and they become wretched in coming to be like each other.) But that of decent people is decent, since it continues to develop through their association, and they seem to become even better people through their activity and by correcting each other, for they model themselves on one another in what they find pleasing, which is the source of the saying, 'noble things from noble men'.

γίνεται οὖν ἢ μὲν τῶν φαύλων φιλία μοχθηρά (κοινωνοῦσι γὰρ φαύλων ἀβέβαιοι ὄντες, καὶ μοχθηροὶ δὲ γίνονται ὁμοιοῦμενοι ἀλλήλοις), ἢ δὲ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν ἐπιεικῆς, συναυξανομένη ταῖς ὁμιλίαις· δοκοῦσι δὲ καὶ βελτίους γίνεσθαι ἐνεργοῦντες καὶ διορθοῦντες ἀλλήλους· ἀπομάττονται γὰρ παρ' ἀλλήλων οἷς ἀρέσκονται, ὅθεν "ἔσθλων μὲν γὰρ ἅπ' ἔσθλα" (1172a8-14).

The passage is concerned primarily with agents whose characters are already formed, or who are far enough along the path of development. But it still points to the power that modelling (ἀπομάττονται) oneself on another can have and offers a clue as to what may take place in the development of the young. Indeed, that modelling oneself on another can have the power to improve even those whose characters are by now formed, would suggest that such modelling would be even more effective in the training of the young whose characters are not yet so fixed.

A further piece of evidence that Aristotle acknowledges the power of imitation and recognises the need to model oneself on a person of good character occurs just a page before, when discussing the need for friendship in good and bad fortune. Noting that the sight of a friend who is pained by one's own misfortune can itself be painful, Aristotle points out that a person of a manly nature will try to prevent his friends from sharing in distress, unlike women or those of an effeminate nature who enjoy having people to wail with them. He concludes the discussion by stating that "it is clear that one ought to imitate the better a man in everything (μιμεῖσθαι δ' ἐν ἅπασι δεῖ δῆλον ὅτι τὸν βελτίω)" (1171b11-12). The immediate message to be taken from the passage is that we ought to follow the 'manly' character in preventing others from sharing in our grief, yet the thought that we should imitate the better man in 'everything' (ἐν ἅπασι) suggests that Aristotle

recognises the importance of imitating better agents over and above the particular case in question. Indeed, the conclusion is almost imperative and seems to carry the same normative force as his claims in Book II that we must become just, and must do so by doing just things.

Finally, in X 9, when Aristotle returns to the topic of moral education, we see evidence again of the importance of virtuous models in the training of the young. Here, Aristotle picks up on a claim made in II 1, where he observes that “lawgivers make the citizens good by training them in habits of right action” (1103b3-4), and turns it into a prescriptive claim emphasising the importance of devising appropriate constitutions. In the best city, the community will be responsible for the supervision of the young in their moral upbringing, but where this fails it would seem appropriate for “each to contribute to his own children’s and friends’ acquisition of excellence”, for “the things a father says (οἱ πατρικοὶ λόγοι) and the habits (τὰ ἔθη) he imposes have the same force in the household as legal provisions and customs in the city” (1180b4-5). That the father’s *habits*, as well as his words, have force in shaping his children’s development clearly suggests that he acts as a character model to his children.⁸

Given the emphasis on the importance of imitation for becoming virtuous in the writings of Aristotle’s immediate predecessors and his own acknowledgment in the final books of the *Ethics* of the power of imitation and the importance of good character models,⁹ we have good grounds for exploring the thought that a learner becomes virtuous through imitation of the virtuous. But what is it that happens when we imitate virtuous models and how might this help to explain our development as virtuous agents?

4.3 *MIMĒSIS* IN THE *POETICS*

I noted in the previous section that a number of commentators have alluded to the imitative quality of the learner’s activity, though few have developed this thought in much detail. Those who have attempted to explain how it is that imitation may contribute to the development of virtue have sought enlightenment in a particular source – outside of the *Ethics* – namely Aristotle’s discussion of *mimēsis* in the *Poetics*. Before we consider what role imitation may play in

⁸ This then sheds new light on Aristotle’s claim that “children of the same parents brought up together and educated alike are more alike in character” (1162a11-14), since we can suppose that such children will imitate and come to be like the same model.

⁹ I owe this term to MM McCabe, who got me to see that the more commonly used ‘role models’ may in fact be too narrow.

the development of virtuous agency, then, I want briefly to say a few words about this text as a potential source of information for Aristotle's views on imitation in moral development.

In the various passages from Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle discussed above that attest to the power of imitation in moral development, the important verb in each is 'μιμεῖσθαι', cognate with the noun 'μίμησις'. For this reason, it is supposed that a fruitful means of discovering the role imitation might play for Aristotle in moral development will be to examine his views on *mimēsis* in general, and then to apply these to the moral sphere. This concept, as we are aware, is not discussed explicitly in the *Ethics*, but is famously treated in the *Poetics*, and it is to this text that commentators then turn for enlightenment.

Some caution, however, is required. It is a familiar fact that the verb 'μιμεῖσθαι' and the noun 'μίμησις' have a notoriously broad range of senses. *Mimēsis* can be understood variously as 'imitation', 'impersonation', 'emulation', but also 'representation', 'reproduction', 'image making' and so forth.¹⁰ For this reason, any one discussion of the concept of *mimēsis* cannot automatically be taken to inform us of a writer's views on *mimēsis* in all senses, since a particular discussion may be restricted to a particular sense and not applicable to other senses beyond that.¹¹ Indeed, even where there may be certain common features or insights that might be thought to apply more widely, we should be wary of coalescing the connections between the senses of *mimēsis* and reducing the concept to its lowest common denominator.

The quotations from Xenophon point to what might generally be regarded as a behavioural, or perhaps more specifically, an emulatory sense of *mimēsis*, in which one agent takes another as a model or a paradigm, and imitates or emulates her behaviour. It is in broadly this sense that I am

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion of the various senses of the concept of *mimēsis* see Halliwell (1986). In Plato alone Halliwell finds the following senses:

- (a) Linguistic: language reflects the essence of things;
- (b) Philosophical: the philosopher's thought aspires to provide a copy of truth – the *mimēsis* of an eternal model;
- (c) Cosmic: the material world may in various ways stand in a mimetic relation to eternal models;
- (d) Visual: the painter's *mimēsis* pictures the appearances of things;
- (e) Mimicry: the voice and the body can be used to reproduce certain properties of the animal and natural world;
- (f) Behaviour: ordinary imitation or emulation;
- (g) Impersonatory: the (non-artistic) acting out of a role;
- (h) Poetic: apart from unspecified references to poetic *mimēsis*, Plato usually treats poetry either as an art of verbal image making, comparable to the painter's, or (in some of its forms) as a special case of (g), i.e. dramatic impersonation;
- (i) Musical: musical modes and structures can give expression to certain human actions and experiences (It is sometimes impossible to disengage music from poetry in Plato's references to *mousikē*;
- (j) Choreographic: dancers can act out representations of human life (1986, p.121).

Textual references for each of these senses are given at (1986, p.121, n.23).

¹¹ This is a familiar issue in Platonic scholarship, and particularly with respect to the connections between Plato's discussion of *mimēsis* in *paideia* in *Republic* III, and his famously negative treatment of *mimēsis* in *Republic* X.

suggesting we can see Aristotle's student of virtue as engaged in imitation too.¹² But the *Poetics* is concerned for the most part with *mimēsis* as it is involved in tragic poetry. This sense of *mimēsis* is still behavioural (as opposed to the mimetic relation in which an image stands to a real object, say), but it consists specifically in the representation of characters to an audience; it is not emulATORY. For this reason, we should be wary of drawing conclusions about the *mimēsis* in moral development from Aristotle's discussion of *mimēsis* as it figures in tragic poetry.

Nevertheless, a particular passage early in the *Poetics* has been selected by a number of commentators as a source of a more general insight into Aristotle's conception of *mimēsis*. Early in the work Aristotle offers an account of the origins of poetry, which he explains have to do with a natural tendency in human beings towards imitation. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Poetry in general can be seen to owe its existence to two causes, and these are rooted in nature. First, there is man's natural propensity, from childhood onwards, to engage in mimetic activity (and this distinguishes man from other creatures, that he is thoroughly mimetic and through mimesis takes his first steps in understanding). Second, there is the pleasure which men take in mimetic objects. An indication of the latter can be observed in practice: for we take pleasure in contemplating the most precise images of things whose sight in itself causes us pain – such as the appearance of the basest animals, or of corpses. Here too the explanation lies in the fact that great pleasure is derived from exercising the understanding, not just for philosophers but in the same way for all men, though their capacity for it may be limited. It is for this reason that men enjoy looking at images, because what happens is that they contemplate them, they apply their understanding and reasoning to each element (identifying this as an image of such-and-such a man, for instance). Since, if it happens that one has no previous familiarity with the sight, then the object will not give pleasure *qua* mimetic object, but because of its craftsmanship, or colour, or for some other such reason.

εοίκασι δὲ γεννηῆσαι μὲν ὄλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτία δύο τινὲς καὶ αὐταὶ φυσικαί. τό τε γὰρ μιμῆσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων: ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὀρώμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφᾶς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἡδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὀρώντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογιζέσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος: ἐπεὶ ἂν μὴ τύχη προεωρακῶς, οὐχ ἢ μίμημα ποιήσει τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν ἢ τὴν χροιάν ἢ διὰ τοιαύτην τινὰ ἄλλην αἰτίαν (*Poetics*, 14.48b4-19, trans. Halliwell)

Although much of the *Poetics* is concerned with a more restricted notion of *mimēsis*, the content of the above passage and in particular the claim that human beings have a natural desire to imitate, strongly suggest that here Aristotle is talking about *mimēsis* in a sense that is not particular to

¹² I have already noted by contrast the way in which Plato may have a more restricted notion of *mimēsis* in mind in his discussion in *Republic* III.

tragic poetry. Moreover, Halliwell encourages us to see that “the enactive sense must be uppermost in Aristotle’s reference to the natural mimetic propensities of the human species” (1986, p.129), presumably because it is more plausible to suppose that we imitate the behaviour and mannerisms of others from our earliest moments, than to suppose, for example, that infants engage in image making or pictorial representations. That the enactive sense is at play in this passage then makes this passage particularly relevant to understanding the kind of imitation that is involved in moral development. *Mimēsis* would appear to be something to which we have an innate tendency and the source of our earliest understanding.

Contrasted with the enactive sense, however, is what clearly looks like an example of a mimetic image in Aristotle’s claim that “we take pleasure in contemplating the most precise images of things whose sight in itself causes us pain – such as the appearance of the basest animals, or of corpses (ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὁρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν)” (1448b10-12). The example is clearly not particular to tragic poetry, but the particularity of the sense of *mimēsis* in play here (i.e. as concerned with mimetic images) might lead us to suppose that what we discover in these lines about the power of imitation cannot be carried over into our understanding of imitation in moral development. Nevertheless, whilst the example does appear to invoke a particular sense of *mimēsis*, the fact that it is offered within the context of a discussion of our natural desire to imitate and a natural pleasure that is taken in imitation, suggests that Aristotle is providing an example of the ways in which pleasure taken in imitation, rather than suggesting that the pleasure gained from imitations is limited to the observation of mimetic images. So understood, the passage reveals that *mimēsis* is something toward which we have a natural tendency, a means by which learning takes place and a source of pleasure. It involves, moreover, recognition and a certain amount of figuring out (συλλογίζεσθαι).

So whilst we ought to be wary of conflating the poetic sense of *mimēsis* with the sense of imitation that I am suggesting is involved in moral development,¹³ the above passage, in its more general treatment of *mimēsis*, may help us to make progress in understanding the possible role of imitation in the development of virtue. Let us consider now what role this might be.

¹³ And for this reason much of Aristotle’s discussion of *mimēsis* in the *Poetics* is too specific to the poetic sense to be relevant to our investigation.

4.4 FOSSEHEIM AND THE DESIRE TO IMITATE

I stated earlier that whilst various commentators have alluded to the imitative nature of moral habituation, the thought has rarely been developed. One exception is Fossheim (2006), who draws on Aristotle's remarks in the *Poetics* with a view to developing a mimetic account of the learner's development. As one of the few developments of this thought within Aristotelian scholarship, Fossheim's account is worth taking into consideration, though his is not an account of imitation's role in moral habituation that I will ultimately adopt.¹⁴ In setting out Fossheim's account, however, I hope to bring more clearly into focus my own account of the role of imitation in moral development, and indeed to show how this account is more explanatory.

To understand the particular role Fossheim envisages for the concept of *mimēsis* in a learner's habituation requires us to understand something of the context in which he offers his account. This, as we shall see, takes as its point of departure Burnyeat's (1980) influential discussion of learning to be good, though, as I will suggest, is based on something of a misreading of Burnyeat's view. Fossheim is seeking to understand how a learner comes to choose virtuous action for its own sake, and begins his inquiry by acknowledging Burnyeat's insightful account of the importance of a learner's enjoyment of virtuous actions in her coming to grasp their value. Burnyeat argues that in learning to properly enjoy those actions that are expressions of the virtues, the agent comes to recognise a value that such actions have, a value that cannot be fully appreciated except through such enjoyment:¹⁵

Accordingly, if learning to do and to take (proper) enjoyment in doing just actions is learning to do and enjoy them for their own sake, for what they are, namely just, and this is not to be distinguished from learning that they are enjoyable for themselves and their intrinsic value, namely their justice and nobility, then perhaps we can give intelligible sense to the thesis that practice leads to knowledge, as follows. I may be told, and may believe, that such and such actions are just and noble, but I have not really learned for myself (taken to heart, made second nature to me) that they have this intrinsic value until I have learned to value (love) them for it, with the consequence that I take pleasure in doing them. To understand and appreciate the value that makes them enjoyable in themselves, I must learn to enjoy them, and that does take time and practice – in short, habituation (Burnyeat, 1980, p.78).

Burnyeat's account is notoriously difficult to pin down, and just how it is that a learner comes to take pleasure in virtuous action in the way Burnyeat suggests she does is an important question

¹⁴ Fossheim's account is adopted by Vakirtzis (2015), who takes it as the basis for his own account of the role of *mimēsis* in character friendship and the continued development of mature agents.

¹⁵ I will propose a somewhat different account of the relation between a learner's enjoyment and her grasp of the value of virtuous action in the following chapter.

(we will return to the issue of the relation between pleasure and the grasp of value in Chapter 5). The suggestion in this quotation, however, is that as the student's appreciation of virtuous activity develops over time, she comes to be motivated to perform such actions for the sake of their intrinsic value, and in this way comes to choose virtuous actions as the virtuous agent does.

The above suggests a transition from an immature form of motivation to the mature choice of the virtuous agent. But Fossheim takes there to be a motivational difficulty arising prior to this transition. For he wonders how it is that a learner can be motivated to practise good actions in the first place. An appeal to the pleasure of virtuous activity cannot explain this stage of the learner's development, argues Fossheim, for the intrinsic enjoyment of virtuous actions surely cannot motivate someone who has *not yet* engaged in virtuous activity.

It is as a response to this challenge – that is, the challenge of initially motivating the student's practice – that Fossheim takes Burnyeat to claim: “that the child's sense of pleasure [...] should be hooked up with just and noble things so that his unreasoned evaluative responses may develop in connection with the right objects” (Burnyeat, 1980, p.78).¹⁶ Both Plato and Aristotle recognise that successful habituation into virtue must train the learner's sense of pleasure, not only because it is a mark of the virtuous agent that she takes pleasure in virtuous action, but because pleasure is initially and for a long time the (young) learner's only source of motivation. Burnyeat is surely right to claim that successful habituation will require the development of the child's sense of pleasure in connection with the right objects. Yet as Fossheim points out, what is missing from Burnyeat's account is an explanation of what such ‘hooking up’ involves and how it is achieved.

Fossheim ventures a possible explanation on Burnyeat's behalf: by the ‘hooking up’ of pleasure and the noble, he suggests, Burnyeat might mean that an early student of virtue must develop an *association* between the two, through habituation.¹⁷ We discussed this view as a version of a

¹⁶ In fact, Fossheim does not accurately represent the dialectic of Burnyeat's account. There is no indication that Burnyeat sees the issue of the child's initial motivation as problematic in the way Fossheim does: Burnyeat is not identifying as a problem the child's motivation to perform virtuous actions, and proposing as a solution an appeal to the only thing that will motivate her to act, namely her sense of pleasure, but rather is claiming that since the child's (only) source of motivation is pleasure, we had better make sure this is aligned with the right objects from the start.

¹⁷ Fossheim attributes this view to Burnyeat as ‘the simplest explanation’ of the hooking up claim, though it is not clear that Burnyeat should be committed to this account. As above, Burnyeat does not claim that the basic pleasures a child takes in certain objects should be appealed to as means of tempting the child onto virtuous action, as if this were some *precursor* to habituation, but rather that (among) the objects in which the child should take pleasure are virtuous actions. This pleasure develops in sophistication over time, and the child comes to see a value in virtuous actions and to be motivated by this value. His claim, I take it, is that if the child is going to recognise certain objects as fine and to be motivated by this property, we had better make sure that it is fine objects that she takes pleasure in in the first place. A better target, I believe, is Curzer (2002, p.159), whose account of habituation as involving pain and the threat of punishment, discussed in the previous chapter, looks closer to the association model.

mechanical picture of habituation in the last chapter; it consists in the thought that in the course of her practice of virtuous actions the learner's performance of such actions must be repeatedly associated with something she already finds pleasurable, so that she thus comes to be motivated to perform those actions that she associates with this pleasure.

On this picture, the object of the learner's pleasure is (initially at least) external to her performance of virtuous actions; and herein, Fossheim rightly argues, lies the problem with such an account. For if the object of the learner's pleasure is external to the performance of virtuous actions, it leaves unexplained how the learner comes to value and so be motivated to perform such actions for their own sake. Furthermore, it encourages a tendency to perform virtuous acts for some further end beyond the action itself, to perform them for the sake of some external reward. And to do this, as we know, is to fail to be virtuous. As Fossheim acknowledges, we cannot expect the learner to value virtuous action in exactly the way that the mature agent does, but an account that explains the development of the learner's motivation by appeal to external, associated pleasures, leaves us with a gap between this and the pleasure that the virtuous agent takes in such actions, performed for their own sake.

So if we agree with Burnyeat that successful habituation must involve the 'hooking up' of the learner's sense of pleasure with virtuous actions, it seems we need an account of this where what the learner takes pleasure in is the very performance of virtuous actions, where she is motivated from the outset to perform such acts, and not to do so merely as a means to some external pleasure. It is in this respect that Fossheim argues that imitation is key.

We saw in *Poetics* IV that Aristotle takes it to be "an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to imitate. Indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all (τό τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι)" (*Poetics*, 1448b5-7). And this natural desire to imitate is incredibly important, Fossheim argues. For as he explains, the fact that we are naturally imitative beings will ensure that a student of virtue – so long as she is provided with appropriate role models – will perform actions in accordance with the virtues, and importantly do so without the need to appeal to external rewards or punishments. A young learner will naturally imitate the actions of a model, and does not therefore need to be coaxed into doing so. But this is not all; Fossheim argues that through the satisfaction of her mimetic desire, the learner will thus take pleasure in the very performance of that activity. It is the act, Fossheim stresses, of *performing* the *mimēsis* that pleases

the learner, and it is this, he thinks, that ensures that the learner's pleasure is taken in her action, and not externally.

In short, then, Fossheim argues that thanks to our natural desire to imitate, the student of virtue will perform virtuous actions without the need for an external reward, and will take pleasure in performing those actions in which successful imitation consists. Thus the learner takes pleasure in performing virtuous actions, and so comes to choose these for their own sake and not for the sake of some ulterior motive.

4.4.1 ASSESSMENT OF FOSSHEIM'S ACCOUNT

Fossheim's account is interesting in various ways, in particular in its emphasis on the thought that our natural mimetic tendencies will help to guarantee that we perform certain sorts of actions – provided, that is, we are presented with appropriate models. But I submit that he is mistaken in thinking that we can account for the development of virtuous motivations simply by appeal to the satisfaction of mimetic desires.

It may be the case that through the satisfaction of her mimetic desire the student takes pleasure in imitating virtuous actions – or as Fossheim puts in, in the 'successful performance' of that action. This pleasure, however, is surely taken in the successful performance of that action *qua* mimetic action, and has nothing to do with the nature of the action *qua* virtuous. One could on this account be equally pleased by the successful performance of a vicious action, if the object of one's imitation were a vicious agent. Yet Fossheim's appeal to our natural mimetic desire was ultimately intended to explain how the student comes to take pleasure in the performance of virtuous actions just as the virtuous agent does, that is, in the performance of such actions *qua* virtuous (or, as we will discuss in the next chapter, *qua* fine).¹⁸

Now, once again, we can't expect the student of virtue to perform virtuous actions in *exactly* the same way as the virtuous agent does, but Fossheim's very complaint was that on an account that explains the development of the learner's motivation by appeal to associated pleasure, a learner will only value virtue incidentally and as a means to the proper object of her pleasure. Whilst Fossheim's account may escape the charge that the student of virtue performs virtuous

¹⁸ Fossheim does acknowledge the distinction between performing an activity *qua* *mimēsis* and performing that activity *qua* activity, but claims that for Aristotle the performance of an activity *qua* *mimēsis* is 'in some respects the same as' the performance of that activity *qua* activity, citing as support Aristotle's claim at 1103a31 that we become something by doing it. Since our very concern, however, is to explain how it is that we become good by doing good things, the account looks dangerously circular if we invoke this passage as support for an interpretation of that claim.

actions merely instrumentally, as a means to some further, external pleasure, he is open to the charge that her performance and enjoyment of such action is still only accidental. Her pleasure, it seems, is taken in her successful imitating (and could be taken in any other thing that she chooses to imitate), and does not have to do with her valuing virtuous action.

I submit, then, that Fossheim has mischaracterised the role of imitation in habituation and in doing so has severely limited the explanatory power of seeing the student's activity as imitative.¹⁹ That we are naturally imitative creatures may well play a role in encouraging a young learner towards virtuous activity, if provided with virtuous character models, but by attributing the success of habituation to the satisfaction of a mimetic desire we do not satisfactorily explain how mimetic engagement with virtuous activity contributes to the development of virtuous agency and eventual realisation of virtuous activity. The explanatory challenge remains unresolved.

4.5 LEARNING THROUGH IMITATION

I believe that Fossheim has focused on the wrong remark of Aristotle's in the *Poetics* IV passage in attempting to explicate the contribution that *mimēsis* might play in our development as virtuous agents. Fossheim focuses almost entirely on Aristotle's claim that we are naturally imitative, and that a certain pleasure is to be gained through imitative activity, but whilst – as I have acknowledged – these facts may play an important role in encouraging students towards virtuous practice, I believe the more instructive remark is the claim that “through imitations man develops his first understanding (τὰς μαθήσεις ποιῆται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας)” (1448b7-8). I want in

¹⁹ I suggest that Fossheim is led to this position because he overly problematises the issue of the student's *initial* motivation and in light of this, misrepresents the purpose of Burnyeat's account and picture of the development of a learner's pleasure he proposes. Fossheim believes that we need to appeal to the concept of *mimēsis* in order to explain how the young learner can ever be motivated to perform virtuous actions in the first place, and believes that it has the additional benefit of being able to explain how the learner, through the pleasure she takes in her *mimēsis* of virtuous activity, learns to value such activity in the same way that the virtuous agent does.

I do not, however, believe we need to regard the issue of the learner's initial motivation to engage in practice as problematic in the way that Fossheim attempts to make out. Fossheim tries to show as problematic the role accorded to parental advice in certain accounts of Aristotelian habituation, arguing that if a child is instructed to perform a certain action, that she cannot then be performing it for its own sake, and rather must be acting from the fear of punishment or because of the prospect of reward (2006, p.107-8). Now, as we know, advice alone cannot bring a person to be motivated by the noble (1179b24ff) and those who in adulthood perform actions in accordance with virtue only through coercion of course fall short of moral virtue. But it is simply mistaken to suppose that the obedience of a child is the same as an adult who is *merely* obedient to the law, and I believe we should thus be suspicious of the idea that any appeal to the advice of a parent in explaining how a child initially comes to perform actions in accordance with the virtues will result in an 'irreducible gap' in her motivation. Aristotle recognises that children are, for the most part, obedient (*NE* I 13), and I suggest he would grant that so long as the child engages in the appropriate way in the activities towards which she is directed (which we are trying to understand) and begins to develop her own conception of the value of such activities, it is not problematic that she is directed towards certain courses of action under the instruction of a parent or some other guide.

what follows to explore the ways in which we might see the learner's imitation of virtue as precisely a process through which she learns, and to think moreover about what it is that she might learn through this process.²⁰

4.5.1 IMITATION AND ATTENTION TO VIRTUOUS ACTION

So, what is it that one might learn through the imitation of a virtuous agent and her activity? An obvious suggestion is that one learns about virtuous action. It is a familiar thought that a learner requires virtuous guides not simply so that she is told what to do, but so that she is provided with examples of virtuous action to follow. And behind this is the equally familiar thought that virtuous action is not codifiable and cannot be captured in any neat set of rules or universal principles that could be prescribed by a teacher, rather: "the agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is, as doctors and navigators do" (1104a10). Thus one might suppose that only in following an agent who is aware in any given case what the appropriate action is, can one acquire knowledge of what virtuous action consists in. This, one might suppose, is part of the force of Aristotle's remark in *NE* II 4 that "things are called just and temperate when they are such as the just and temperate person would do" (1105b5-7); by looking to the just and temperate person, we can discover what is the just and temperate thing to do in a given situation.²¹

One might add to this the thought that a virtuous model provides a learner not only with insight into the particularity of virtuous action, but into its variety as well. So Broadie writes:

If the young person is trained to justice by getting him to perform just actions again and again, these may be physically and psychologically quite different though they have it in common that they are just. This too is something which we have to learn if we are going to have the virtue of justice ourselves, so that practice should cover all sorts of cases, in which the just action is sometimes a giving, sometimes a withholding, sometimes treating people alike, sometimes differently and so on (1991, p.108).

It is surely correct that any understanding of the nature of just action and knowledge of what just action consists in will require a learner to see the variety of forms that such action can take. And

²⁰ Sherman (1989, p.168) too recognises the importance of imitation as a source of learning, and we will take note of certain aspects of her view in what follows. But whilst Sherman focuses on the knowledge of virtuous action that the learner acquires through the course of her practice, we should be wary of seeing this as distinct from her motivational development too. As I will argue at the end of this chapter and in the next, the understanding of virtuous action and situational awareness that a learner gains through the imitation of the virtuous also puts her in a position to grasp the value of such action, as I explain in Chapter 5.

²¹ This extends not only to actions conceived of in behavioural terms, but to emotional responses too. With respect to the virtue of courage, for example, a virtuous model might show a young learner that a pet dog is not to be feared, and can be approached, but that fires or busy roads are rightly cause for trepidation, and to a more mature learner that minor slights are no grounds for extreme anger, but that anger at great injustices is warranted, and so on.

it is surely correct too that such knowledge could not be acquired through any kind of purely theoretical instruction, but rather through the example and guidance of a virtuous (or certainly, more developed) agent. But so far this does not tell us much about why *imitation* itself should play such an important role in our moral development, nor help us to make much progress in our project of explaining the development of the learner's motivation.

One obvious complaint one might have is that this suggestion so far doesn't tell us much about why imitation is so important, and not merely the observation of a character model. The proposal so far motivates the importance of the presence of virtuous models for our development, but not our imitation of them as such. Despite my rejection of his account, however, a remark of Fossheim's might offer a route into explaining why imitation itself and not mere observation is so important in coming to know about virtuous action. Explaining why it is that imitation is superior not only to chance action, but action performed following another's detailed instruction, Fossheim writes:

That [the learner] is doing the action mimetically will mean, for instance, that her attention is on carrying it out as perfectly as possible, that an important kind of failure will consist in doing something which falls short of, or otherwise misses the target in relation to, the doing of X. Performing X mimetically entails a closer affinity to its full performance than is guaranteed if X is done by pure chance, or if it is done with a view to an ulterior reward, or if it is carried out step-by-step according to someone else's detailed instructions (cf. *NE* 1105a1-23). For none of these other modes of performance is it required that one's focus is on X in the relatively strong sense that mimetic performance requires. This is how doing X mimetically entails somehow 'doing X for its own sake' (2007, p.133).

Fossheim does not explain how doing something in the way described "entails somehow 'doing X for its own sake'", though I take it that it has to do with the idea that in attempting to perform a successful imitation, one's focus will be on getting the action right, and so on the action itself, rather than on what one might gain from performing that action, and so on. Fossheim has not done enough to explain how this kind of focus entails choosing an action for its own sake, but he is right at least to draw our attention to the attentiveness involved in imitative activity (or at least involved in imitative activity that is consciously undertaken). When engaging in imitative activity, the student is not passive in her observation of a model, but as Fossheim puts it, must also 'use' this model as the basis of her *mimēsis* (2006, p.111). To produce a successful imitation, the imitator must be particularly attentive to the question of what the perfection or failure of that activity consists in, and so be focused more on the nature of that activity than she would be if she were merely engaged in observation.

The suggestion so far is that through imitation we begin to acquire knowledge of what virtuous action consists in, which Aristotle might put in terms of acquiring ‘the that’ of virtuous action, famously discussed in *NE* I 4.²² We might connect this with the common thought discussed in Chapter 3 that a mindless or mechanical picture of habituation could not account for the knowledge of virtuous actions required for mature virtuous action, and see this picture as an antidote to such a view. But we can also see how imitative activity, so conceived, will afford the opportunity to develop the capacities that must be active when engaging in mature, virtuous activity (as discussed too in Chapter 3). For an imitator must actively identify the relevant features of what she is imitating. She must attend particularly closely to the model’s actions and responses, seeing particular features of the model’s action and the situation as important, whilst abstracting away from others. In this way, through mimetic engagement with virtuous activity, the student not only becomes more attuned to the nature of the virtuous model’s action, but she also develops important cognitive skills of identification of features, abstraction from particulars, and so forth, which will allow her to go on herself in the future.

It is this feature of imitative activity, I believe, that we see emphasised in Sherman’s discussion of imitation in moral development. Sherman, as we have seen, is keen to emphasise the sense in which habituation must be ‘critical’, and seeks in the following quotation to show the extent to which critical activity and its enjoyment characterise all stages of development. She notes, in light of the *Poetics* IV discussion, that “at the early stages, discriminatory activity will often take the form of *mimēsis*”, and goes on to suggest that:

Intellectual delight, here, seems to hang on making a discovery, on coming to understand or actively puzzle out (*sullogizesthai*) what is not yet familiar in terms of what is. ‘This is that’ is, within the mimetic mode, a classification of actual characters, ways of acting and feeling, features of circumstances, etc., through familiarity with some represented form. Within the ethical sphere ‘to figure out that this is that’ is again a matter of broadening one’s inductive base, of the learner sizing up situations in terms of past experience plus some imaginative and affective feel for how it is related to what is at hand. It is significant that Aristotle describes this process as *sullogizesthai*. It is itself a kind of critical activity which, in the case of action, precedes the practical inference (*sullogismos* or deliberation) about what to do. As we have described it in earlier chapters, *it involves a discerning of the particulars, a reading of the*

²² Here Aristotle writes:

This is why one should have been well brought up in good habits if one is going to listen adequately to lectures about things noble and just, and in general about political (social) affairs. For the beginning (starting point) is ‘the that’, and if this is sufficiently apparent to a person, he will not in addition have a need for ‘the because’. Such a person has, or can easily get hold of, beginnings (starting points), where he who has neither... let him hearken to the words of Hesiod (διὸ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἦχθαι καλῶς τὸν περὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων καὶ ὄλων τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀκουσόμενον ἱκανῶς. ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ ὅτι, καὶ εἰ τοῦτο φαίνοιτο ἀρκούντως, οὐδὲν προσδεήσει τοῦ διότι: ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἔχει ἢ λάβοι ἂν ἀρχὰς ῥαδίως. ὃ δὲ μηδέτερον ὑπάρχει τούτων, ἀκουσάτω τῶν Ἡσιόδου) (1095b4-9, trans. Burnyeat).

situation in terms of salient considerations. As such, it is a reasoning that is non-procedural; it is a 'figuring out' by 'improvising' (1106b15), by remaining close to and affected by the concrete details (1989, p.168, my emphasis).

Imitative activity, Sherman suggests, already involves the kind of 'figuring out' that is characteristic of the mature virtuous agent and in particular the discerning of particulars that is necessary for mature virtuous action. By seeing the learner as engaged in imitation it seems we are thus offered a way of understanding how this activity, whilst distinct from that of the virtuous agent, might allow for the development of the capacities that are required for mature virtuous activity.

The proposals discussed so far are more promising than Fossheim's initial account of the role that imitation plays in the development of virtue. But they do not yet do enough to explain what it is we have been seeking to account for, namely how a learner moves from performing alienable actions to being the author of her actions in a strict sense. I believe however that we can develop the account in such a way that helps to explain how this kind of change is effected.

4.6 IMITATION AND THE VIRTUOUS AGENT'S PERSPECTIVE

We can gain further insight into the learner's imitation and what this may involve and effect, by reflecting on two things that have already been mentioned in passing, namely the proper object of the learner's imitation, and her purpose in imitating. Our discussion so far has emphasised a particular aspect of the learner's imitation, in which her focus is seen to be on the actions of a virtuous agent and we might thus suppose that what the learner imitates are the virtuous agent's actions. As the foregoing discussion shows, the learner's imitation certainly will involve an attentiveness to the actions of a virtuous agent, and be manifested in the actions she performs. But I think it is mistaken to think that the object of her imitation is the virtuous agent's action and not instead the virtuous agent herself. After all, we saw in Xenophon that it is *Socrates* that his followers must imitate (ἐαυτῷ μιμουμένους, *Memorabilia*, I.ii 2-3), that people ought to imitate those who are now preeminent (τούς γε νῦν πρωτεύοντας μιμούμενοι, *Memorabilia*, III v.14), that *Agesilaus* is a paradigm of virtue (ἡ Ἀγησιλάου ἀρετὴ παράδειγμα, *Agesilaus* X 2), and again that by imitating a pious, just, sober and self-controlled person we cannot become bad. In Plato too it is courageous, temperate, pious and free people (ἀνδρείους, σώφρονας, όσίους, ἐλευθέρους, *Rep.* 395c) whom the young guardians must imitate, and again in the passages from the *Ethics* it was on one another that the virtuous friends model themselves (ἀπομάττονται γὰρ παρ' ἀλλήλων, 1172a12-13).

As for the learner's purpose in imitating the virtuous agent, we can contrast her intention with the rash man, discussed in *NE* III 7, who it seems wishes merely to appear like the brave person, in wishing to appear (βούλεται φαίνεσθαι) to have the attitude towards brave things that she does. Thus the rash man imitates the brave person in what she does. But the successful student of virtue does not want simply to *appear* like the virtuous agent, she wishes rather to *be* like her. She is not a pretender to virtue (προσποιητικός), but is seeking to become virtuous.

Putting together these thoughts about the object of the learner's imitation and her purpose in imitating, I suggest we should see her imitation as consisting in more than the simple copying – however attentively done – of virtuous actions. In imitating and trying to be like the virtuous agent, the learner must not simply seek to reproduce her actions, but also to adopt her perspective. She must try to see things as the virtuous agent does. It is then from this perspective that she performs the actions that the virtuous agent would perform. The learner must see the situation in which she finds herself as if through the eyes of the virtuous agent; she must see the features of the situation that are, or would be, salient to the virtuous agent and then act as the virtuous agent would act in response to these. The learner does not simply copy a temperate agent in refusing a second slice of cake; rather, in imitating the temperate agent, the learner adopts her perspective, and attempts to see, as if through her eyes, that the second piece of cake is one too many and is thus something that the virtuous agent would avoid.

To say that a learner, in imitating a virtuous agent, adopts her perspective rather than simply copies her actions may seem demanding as a picture of imitation. But it is a form of imitation we see even in children's games. An important difference between the case of games and the case of moral development is that games involve an acknowledged form of pretence, but reflecting on such cases can help to bring into focus this picture of the learner's imitation of the virtuous agent. Consider, say, a group of children playing doctors and patients. The child playing the doctor does not simply copy the actions she has seen a doctor perform, such as holding a stethoscope up to the chest of her patient; this she does, but in inhabiting the role of the doctor, she also sees opportunities for providing 'medical care', where she didn't previously: her playmate's scratched knee affords the opportunity for bandaging, as do her broken teddy-bears and so on. Or imagine again a child playing the role of headteacher in a playground game, who in inhabiting this role quickly sees opportunities to tell his playmates off for untucked shirts or chewing gum, where neither would normally register with him. In imitating the headteacher he has to adopt his perspective, and to imagine the situation as he would see it. So whilst this may appear a more

demanding picture of imitation than one on which an imitator simply copies the actions of another, it is nevertheless a form of imitation of which even young learners are capable.

So how does seeing the learner's imitative activity in this way help with our explanatory project? Now, one thing that is achieved by adopting the perspective of another is that in doing so the learner will be forced to stand outside of her own (initial) perspective, and importantly to see the world as structured not simply so as to serve her own immediate desires and to provide her with pleasure. When faced with a particular situation, the imitator will not simply look at the world and consider what will bring her immediate pleasure, or what will serve her immediate desires; rather, she must think about what features of the situation the virtuous agent would see as important, and the action she would perform in light of those features. In this way, the adopting of the virtuous agent's perspective already sees a move away from a way of acting that consists in the pursuit of bodily pleasure and satisfaction of appetitive desires, to a more mature form of action that involves a more panoramic view, as it were, of the situation and recognition of the importance of factors other than those which relate to one's own immediate pleasures.

Further still, this mode of imitation also importantly affords the learner the opportunity to see virtuous actions not as isolated performances, but as the appropriate, practical response to the situations in which she finds herself. It reveals to her what it is about the situation that makes the virtuous agent's action an appropriate response; an awareness that is more difficult to come by if one merely copies a virtuous agent's actions. But more than this, it enables her to learn to read situations well and reveals to her the things that morally matter, which may not have been apparent to her in the past.²³ I will argue in the following chapter that in being so positioned the student of virtue does not simply acquire knowledge of virtuous action, but is enabled to perceive the value of virtuous action that is grasped by the virtuous agent.

Before we turn to this, however, there are two final points to be added to this picture.

4.6.1 PERCEIVING TOGETHER

One might be concerned about how it is that a learner could ever come to imagine these features of situations that are salient to the virtuous agent but have not thus far been apparent to her. For if they are not apparent to her, how can she imagine them? Here the answer is surely that a learner

²³ Analogously, we can imagine an able-bodied person who is unaware of the difficulties a wheelchair user may have in navigating a university campus. Only when he adopts the perspective of the wheelchair user do the number of staircases, narrow doorways and lack of ramps become apparent to him; these things become salient.

does not, at least in the early stages of her education, do this alone. A virtuous agent not only acts as a model for the learner, but can offer guidance too, guiding her attention to the features that matter about a situation. This is one of the potential roles I wanted to allow for a guide when I argued in Chapter 1 that we should not exclude from the learner's practice the involvement of 'practical teaching' on the part of a more developed agent. This kind of guidance then does not simply instil in the learner certain beliefs about moral virtue, but is instrumental in the training of her perceptions and, as I will later argue, her motivations too.

I have argued already that Aristotle's discussions of friendship and moral education in the final books of the *Ethics* point to the importance of virtuous guides in moral development. But we might suppose that this kind of 'joint attention' to situations and actions, and the role I am suggesting this can play in educating the learner's perception is plausibly amongst the activities Aristotle has in mind when he discusses the importance of living together (συζῆν) at the end of *NE IX 9*. He writes here that the virtuous agent must:

perceive together his friend's being, and this will come about in living together and sharing conversation and thought. For it seems that living together in the case of human beings is to converse, not to share the same pasture in the case of grazing animals.

συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, τοῦτο δὲ γίνοιτ' ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν δόξειε τὸ συζῆν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων λέγεσθαι, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν βοσκομάτων τὸ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νέμεσθαι (1170b10-14).

The passage attests to the importance of perceiving together (συναισθάνεσθαι),²⁴ and points to the richness of a human life lived together, which involves more than living concurrently in a shared space, but engaging in activities together and sharing thoughts and conversations. We might reasonably suppose that shared perceptions count amongst the shared thoughts referred to here.

Interestingly, then, whilst on the one hand we can see that a young person will require more active guidance in being brought to see the morally important features of situations, whereas a more developed learner will be able more often to inhabit the virtuous agent's perspective on her own, being in a better position to imagine a situation as the virtuous agent would see it, these remarks in *IX 9* also point to the importance of joint perception even in mature and virtuous activity, and indicate that this is something that could continue to enrich our perception of the

²⁴ The importance of this is obscured in Irwin's translation, in which he renders 1170b10 as "he must then perceive his friends being [together with his own]", implying that the συν- of συναισθάνεσθαι has to do with the two objects perceived by the virtuous agent (his own being, and his friends) rather than this being an instance of joint perception. McCabe ([2012], 2015) emphasises the importance of the συν- prefix in both the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemean Ethics*.

world. This, indeed, is something to which McCabe draws attention at the end of her examination of self-perception in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Here she writes:

If we are perceiving something together, and reflecting perceptually at the same time on what we are perceiving, the process of perceiving may be rich in content, and productive in terms of the development of our natural capacities. For example, I may see that grey wagtail over there just because we have practised bird-recognition on our ornithological expeditions; and my doing so is itself a part of our joint reflective perception. I may get better at playing tennis by practising doubles with you, and acquiring an improved sense of where the ball is relative to my racquet and yours by seeing it repeatedly coming right at us over the net, and by perceiving that I am seeing it that way. I may enjoy music alone by reflective perception of what I hear, and have heard; all the more so when we listen together, and I think of us both as perceiving the same cadence, as our appreciation of music, how we hear it, develops over years of listening together. In ethical cases, too, my sense of moral perception may be enhanced by our seeing the situation together; and by doing so over time as our friendship matures. Why should we not be able to think of a rich perceptual life together, just as we might have a rich shared intellectual life? And when we do, if that life is reflective enough, it will focus our attention both on what we see and hear, and on who we are who do so, and who our companions are who share or refract our point of view. What is more, it is this very reflectiveness that explains our progress—in ornithology, in tennis, in musical appreciation, and in doing the right thing. Is it the mischief of sceptical arguments that prevent us from seeing Aristotle's point in the *EE*—that we can have a genuinely shared life of the eye and the ear? ([2012] 2015, pp.363-364).

On this reading, not only would a learner's perception of situations be developed through the guidance of a more developed agent and her own imitation of that agent, taking on her perspective, but in acting *together* and perceiving *together*, and reflecting on this, the perceptual life of both agents would seem greatly to be enriched.

4.6.2 IMITATION AND SELF-PERCEPTION

The final feature of the learner's imitation I want to bring out concerns the learner's perspective with respect to herself, as she imitates the virtuous agent. I have argued that we should see the learner as attending closely both to the virtuous agent and her actions, and attempting to adopt the perspective of the virtuous agent and to see the world as she does. Now on the one hand there is a sense in which this involves adopting a perspective that is not her own,²⁵ and we might moreover think that in trying to adopt *another's* perspective and to act as another person would act, the learner will see herself precisely as an imitator.

²⁵ In the final chapter of this thesis I will develop an account of how through acting this perspective becomes her own, and the learner comes to see things just as the virtuous agent does.

And yet in performing the actions that the virtuous agent would, as a response to the situations in which she finds herself, the learner will also see herself as the agent of those actions, will see these as things that *she in fact does*, and as the way in which *she does in fact respond* to the situations in which she finds herself. So whilst the actions that she performs are still in a sense alienable and are properly speaking the actions of the virtuous agent, we can see how through the imitation of a virtuous agent a learner begins to see the world from the perspective of the virtuous agent, and to see herself as an agent of virtuous actions.

As a closing thought, it's worth reflecting on an important difference between the role I have assigned to imitation in the development of the learner and the role that was assigned by Fossheim. Fossheim, as we saw, assigned imitation a role only in the early development of the learner, as a means of motivating the learner to engage in the practice of virtuous actions 'in the first place'.²⁶ In this way, imitation is treated in a similar way to the way in which habituation itself is treated by some commentators, namely as a discrete and early stage in the learner's development, to be succeeded by more sophisticated forms of education.

But whilst Aristotle's remarks in *Poetics* IV certainly give us reason to think that a learner will be engaged in imitative activity from an early age, for imitation is the means by which humans achieve their *earliest* understanding (τὰς μαθήσεις ποιῆται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, *Poetics* 1448b7-8), to restrict the role of imitation to the learner's early practice in this way is, I think, mistaken. Just as I am arguing that the habituation process itself, consisting in the practice of virtuous actions, should be seen as extending until maturity, rather than as a discrete and early stage of a learner's education, so too should we see the learner's imitation of the virtuous as extending beyond her early efforts at virtuous action. The nature of the learner's imitative activity may of course develop over time, and I suggest in particular that a young learner will be more reliant on the presence of a virtuous model in the early stages of her habituation, becoming more autonomous and more an author of her own actions as she develops. But in seeing the learner as nevertheless engaged in a form of imitation over this time, as I have suggested, we avail ourselves of a richer and more enlightening account of her development than that offered by Fossheim.

With this picture in place, I want to consider in the next chapter how in the course of doing the things that a virtuous agent would do, and from her perspective, the learner might come to grasp the value of such actions and over time to choose these for their own sake.

²⁶ Although he also attempted to show how an imitative model of the learner's action could better explain the eventual development of virtuous choice than those accounts which appealed to the association of pleasures.

5 PERCEIVING THE FINE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of Chapter 3 we examined a recent proposal within scholarship on Aristotelian moral habituation, according to which Aristotle's learner can, and indeed must, act (on occasion) for the sake of the 'noble' or the 'fine' (*to kalon*), if her habituation is to be successful. The supposition was that if a learner can occasionally act for the sake of the fine, then through repeated practice, this way of acting can be made more regular until it can be said to be a stable disposition of the agent. I argued in response that behind this proposal is a suspect picture both of Aristotle's stability condition (1105a33) and of what happens in the course of the student's habituation. But I argued also that this proposal fails to account for one of the things for which we ought to be accounting, namely just how the learner develops this distinctive form of motivation, (that is, acting for the sake of the fine and choosing virtuous actions for their own sake). Moreover, I argued that this interpretation fails to take seriously the implication of Aristotle's remark at 1105b4-5, that it is *by* doing just and temperate things that this motivational condition (amongst others) comes to be met. Both this remark, and Aristotle's repeated insistence on the importance of our *doing* virtuous things strongly indicate that there is a certain value to be grasped in the practice of virtuous actions, and that only having done these and having grasped this value can an agent come to choose such actions for their own sake. In this chapter, then, I turn to the question of what it is that happens when a learner performs virtuous actions, and what value it is that she may come to grasp through such performance.

My account will proceed via Aristotle's remarks on the connection between virtuous activity and the fine, and I will suggest that it is the fineness of virtuous action that a learner discovers in the course of her practice.¹ The fineness of virtuous action is something that can be perceived, though as I will argue, a certain amount of training is required for an agent to be in a position to perceive this value in action. But this, I will argue at the end of the chapter, is just what the

¹ Versions of this view can be found in Burnyeat (1980), Achtenberg (2002), Moss (2012), Charles (unpublished MS).

student's imitation of a virtuous agent – discussed in Chapter 4 – puts the learner in a position to see. In perceiving the fineness of virtuous action I will argue that the learner at the same time sees such action as attractive and worth going for, and in this way learns to choose virtuous actions for their own sake.

5.2 CHOOSING FOR THE SAKE OF THE FINE

We are trying to understand how the student of virtue comes to grasp the value of virtuous action, and so how it is that she comes to choose virtuous actions for their own sake. In attempting to do so, however, we are faced with the difficulty that Aristotle says very little by way of what it is to choose an action for its own sake. Perhaps the most natural way of getting at what it is to choose a virtuous action for its own sake is by contrast with idea of acting with an ulterior motive: performing a generous action in order merely to look good, performing a just action merely out of fear of punishment, and so on. Aristotle himself comes close to saying this in his discussion of of choiceworthiness in Book X, when he writes that:

An activity is chosen in its own right if nothing further apart from it is sought from it. Actions in accord with virtue seem to be of this sort; for to do fine and excellent things is choiceworthy for itself.

καθ' αὐτὰς δ' εἰσὶν αἰρεταὶ ἀφ' ὧν μηδὲν ἐπιζητεῖται παρὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν. τοιαῦται δ' εἶναι δοκοῦσιν αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις: τὰ γὰρ καλὰ καὶ σπουδαῖα πράττειν τῶν δι' αὐτὰ αἰρετῶν (1176b6-8).

Here Aristotle doesn't mention ulterior motives, but rather performing something for the sake of something else; in acting with an ulterior motive, however, one typically performs the action not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else (for the rewards it may bring you, for example.) But something is choiceworthy, or chosen (αἰρεταὶ) for itself when it is performed not for the sake of something beyond it.

The passage reveals more than just this, however, for we are also offered a positive characterisation of at least some things that are choiceworthy in their own right, namely things that are fine (τὰ καλὰ). The connection between choice and the fine is something that Aristotle in fact has established much earlier in the work, for he tells us that:

...there are three objects of choice – fine, expedient² and pleasant – and three objects of avoidance – their contraries, shameful, harmful and painful. About all of these the good

² Cooper ([1996] 1999, pp.265-266) suggests that the expedient here in fact be understood as the good. Moss meanwhile argues that these three objects are all species of the good (2012, pp.209-210).

person is correct and the bad person is in error, and especially about pleasure. For this is shared with animals, and follows upon every object of choice, since the fine and the expedient appear pleasant as well.

τριῶν γὰρ ὄντων τῶν εἰς τὰς αἰρέσεις καὶ τριῶν τῶν εἰς τὰς φυγὰς, καλοῦ συμφέροντος ἡδέος, καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων, αἰσχροῦ βλαβεροῦ λυπηροῦ, περὶ ταῦτα μὲν πάντα ὁ ἀγαθὸς κατορθωτικὸς ἐστὶν ὁ δὲ κακὸς ἀμαρτητικὸς, μάλιστα δὲ περὶ τὴν ἡδονήν: κοινή τε γὰρ αὕτη τοῖς ζῴοις, καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπὸ τὴν αἴρεσιν παρακολουθεῖ: καὶ γὰρ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ συμφέρον ἡδὺ φαίνεται. (1104b30-1105a1).³

The fine, as well as the pleasant and the expedient, is an object of choice, and with respect to all three of these objects the virtuous agent gets things right. Moreover, the fine, as well as the expedient, appears pleasant, and this thought will be of significance in what follows.

The fine's status as an object of choice for the virtuous agent is something that comes to the fore more so in Aristotle's detailed discussions of the moral virtues in Books III-IV. Here we learn not only that specific characters – the generous or the magnificent agent, say – act for the sake of the fine (1120a23-27; 1122b6-10), but that this is a feature of virtuous activity in general: “actions in accordance with the virtues are fine and [done] for the sake of the fine (αἱ δὲ κατ’ ἀρετὴν πράξεις καλαὶ καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα)” (1120a23). Indeed, as Richardson-Lear notes, this way of characterising the choice of the virtuous agent appears in these books to have replaced Aristotle's talk of choosing virtuous actions for their own sake, which he mentioned only in *NE* II 4.⁴

Now on the one hand, the fact that the fine is an object of choice for the virtuous agent and that for the sake of which she acts, might suggest to us a more promising way of approaching the question of the virtuous agent's choice and how this develops. For the concept of the fine offers a more concrete way of thinking about the value that the virtuous agent grasps when she chooses virtuous actions for their own sake, and I follow Richardson-Lear in supposing that “what makes

³ See also *Topics* 1.13 105a27-28 and 3.3 118b27-28.

⁴ Moss too assumes the equivalence between choosing for the sake of the fine and choosing actions for their own sake (2012, p.207). Tuozzo (1995) casts some doubt on the assumed equivalence, and argues against the view that “virtuous action has a nature and worth independent of any relation it may have to contemplation” (1995, p.130). Tuozzo is concerned that this assumption leads commentators in turn to assume that choosing virtuous action for its own sake does not entail choosing it for the sake of contemplation. The question of how the choice of virtuous action for its own sake and is related to the choice of virtuous action for the sake of contemplation (see e.g. *NE* 1145a6-11) is beyond the scope of this thesis. In any case, I think Richardson-Lear is correct in raising the following concern about Tuozzo's account:

Tuozzo's interpretation, although fascinating, has the unfortunate consequence that insofar as virtuous actions are fine they are *not* chosen for their own sakes. According to Tuozzo, actions are noble insofar as they express (virtuous) dispositions that promote the psychic leisure necessary for happiness. But since their nobility is entirely instrumental, in what respect are they choiceworthy for themselves? (2004, pp.124-5, n.3).

actions fine is also (in part) what makes them worth choosing for their own sakes” (2006, p.117).⁵ Moreover, the ubiquity of Aristotle’s references to the fine throughout the *Ethics* means there is more material to draw on than Aristotle’s limited reference to the thought that virtuous action is chosen for its own sake.

On the other hand, we might be concerned that this only shifts our task from explaining how it is that someone comes to choose an action for its own sake, to explaining how it is that someone comes to choose for the sake of the fine. And as Richardson-Lear again notes, we are faced with the problem that “it is not at all clear what [Aristotle] means by saying that virtuous action is *kalon* or what motivation he is pointing to when he says that the genuinely good person acts for the sake of the *kalon*” (2006, p.116).

That Aristotle does not offer any account of the fine, or of aiming at the fine, in the *Ethics* is something that must be admitted right away, and for this reason any attempt at understanding the role of the fine in the virtuous agent’s action and development will be, of necessity, somewhat speculative. Nevertheless, Aristotle’s various allusions to the fine in his discussion of the virtuous agent’s activity do, I suggest, allow for some possible insight into what it is that the student of virtue discovers when she practises virtuous actions, and how in so doing she comes over time to choose these for their own sake.

5.3 THE FINE AS A PROPERTY OF VIRTUOUS ACTION

One important thing that we learn in the course of Aristotle’s discussion of moral virtue and action, is that the fine is not merely an object of choice for the virtuous agent, but that it is a feature of virtuous activity. This much may already be apparent from the passages quoted above, and it is in fact something that Aristotle stresses from the very beginning of the work. In an important passage in Book I, Aristotle places great emphasis on the fineness of virtuous activity, by way of explaining why the life of the virtuous agent will be the most pleasant and not in need of any, as it were, ‘supplementary’ pleasures:

Moreover, the life of these active people is also pleasant in itself. For being pleased is [a condition of] the soul, and to each person what is pleasant is that, in relation to which, he is said to be a lover; a horse, for instances, is pleasant to the horse-lover, a spectacle, to the lover of spectacles. In the same way, just things please the lover of justice, and in general things in

⁵ Richardson-Lear goes on to say: “that is to say, goodness and fineness in action are in large part constituted by the same property (to anticipate: being well ordered by the human good)” (2006, p.117). Whilst I will refer below to some of the features of virtuous actions that render them fine, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider that in virtue of which Aristotle regards virtuous actions as good.

accord with virtue please the lover of virtues. Now for most people the things that are pleasant conflict, because these are not pleasant by nature, whereas to lovers of the fine what is pleasant are things pleasant by nature. Actions in accord with virtue are like this, so that they are pleasant both to these people and are pleasant on their own.

ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὁ βίος αὐτῶν καθ' αὐτὸν ἡδύς. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἡδεσθαι τῶν ψυχικῶν, ἐκάστῳ δ' ἐστὶν ἡδὺ πρὸς ὃ λέγεται φιλοτιοῦτος, οἷον ἵππος μὲν τῷ φιλίππῳ, θέαμα δὲ τῷ φιλοθεώρῳ: τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ τὰ δίκαια τῷ φιλοδικαίῳ καὶ ὅλως τὰ κατ' ἀρετὴν τῷ φιλαρέτῳ. τοῖς μὲν οὖν πολλοῖς τὰ ἡδέα μάχεται διὰ τὸ μὴ φύσει τοιαῦτ' εἶναι, τοῖς δὲ φιλοκάλοις ἐστὶν ἡδέα τὰ φύσει ἡδέα: τοιαῦται δ' αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις, ὥστε καὶ τούτοις εἰσὶν ἡδεῖαι καὶ καθ' αὐτάς (1099a7-15).

The connection between the fine and pleasure established in this passage is something to which we will return; for the present let this passage stand as evidence of the fineness of virtuous activity.⁶ This thought is made more explicit still some lines later when Aristotle writes that:

...actions in accord with the virtues will be pleasant in their own right. Moreover, these actions will be good and fine as well as pleasant; indeed, they will be each of these more than anything else is, if the excellent person judges well about these things; and he [*does*] judge in the way we have said.

...καθ' αὐτάς ἂν εἶεν αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις ἡδεῖαι. ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀγαθαὶ γε καὶ καλά, καὶ μάλιστα τούτων ἕκαστον, εἴπερ καλῶς κρίνει περὶ αὐτῶν ὁ σπουδαῖος: κρίνει δ' ὡς εἵπομεν (1099a21-24).

So when Aristotle writes that the virtuous agent aims at the fine, or that the virtuous agent acts for the sake of the fine, this suggests that there is a quality to the actions she performs, which the virtuous agent in some sense grasps and sees as worth pursuing. And this might suggest that the place to look for insight into the development of virtuous motivations is in the student's performance of virtuous actions themselves.

This, certainly, would make good sense of the claims in *NE* II 4 to which I drew our attention in previous chapters; that is, his claims that we come to choose virtuous actions for their own sake by doing virtuous things many times (1105b4-5), and that we have no hope of becoming good unless we practise virtuous things (1105b11-12). The thought would be that there is a value in the actions themselves – an objective value that is there to be discovered – and that the learner discovers this in the course of her practice; it is a value, perhaps, that could not be discovered without having performed those actions, or so I will argue.

⁶ A small amount of work may be required to bring this thought out, but that virtuous activity is fine is nevertheless the implication of the passage: A type of person takes pleasure in what he is a lover of, and since a lover of fine things will take pleasure in those things, this implies that the virtuous actions he takes pleasure in have the quality of being fine.

We need, however, to go a little more slowly. For in light of our discussion in Chapter 2, and the distinction that Aristotle establishes in *NE* II 4 between virtuous actions, that can be performed by both a learner and a virtuous agent, and the *virtuously* performed actions of the virtuous agent, the obvious question that faces us is: what conception of action does Aristotle have in mind when he describes virtuous activity and virtuous actions as fine in this passage? Is he talking of virtuous actions, that is the things that are done (those acts of agency, identifiable with some change or event, and of which the accompanying psychological states of the agent are variously determinable), which can be performed by both the virtuous agent and the learner? Or is he speaking only of the mature *praxis* of the virtuous agent – that is, of virtuous action which is performed knowingly, for its own sake, and from a stable state?⁷ In other words, could a learner perform fine actions or not, and are we entitled to suppose that there is a value in the things that the learner does that she comes to realise in so doing?

The Book 1 passages quoted above certainly show that, at the very least, the activity of the mature virtuous agent is fine, though it is unclear whether these provide any evidence that the actions of the learner are fine too. For these passages have their place within a more general discussion of the pleasant nature of a virtuous agent's life, making clear that the mature virtuous agent is the focus of Aristotle's discussion. Immediately prior to the passages quoted, Aristotle states that one who is engaged in 'virtuous activity' (ἡ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια, 1098b31), as opposed to one who is, for example, asleep, will necessarily act and act well (πράξει γὰρ ἔξ ἀνάγκης, καὶ εὖ πράξει, 1099a3), and his references here to virtuous activity and acting well make clear that he means to refer here to the activity of the mature virtuous agent.

If Aristotle only means to characterise virtuously performed virtuous action as fine, this makes it more difficult to see how the concept of the fine could help to shed light both on the virtuous agent's choice of virtuous action for its own sake, and the development of the learner's disposition to choose through her practice. For if fineness is only a quality of virtuously performed action, action that *involves* choosing an action for its own sake, it is not clear what it is that the learner would discover in her own performance of virtuous actions which do not yet have this quality.

When Aristotle introduces the thought that virtuous actions have the property of being both fine and naturally pleasant, he uses the locution 'αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις' (1099a14), a phrase he repeats some lines later (1099a21). In contrast with the 'ἡ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια' of 1098b31, this

⁷ This passage comes, after all, before the distinction in *NE* II 4 has been drawn so we must be especially careful when thinking about the conception of action that may be in play here.

phrase might be taken to refer to the things the virtuous agent does, that is, to the virtuous actions themselves, rather than the particular way in which she does these, which is captured by the idea of virtuous activity. This however is not conclusive and it will help then to look at other texts to see if there is any further evidence that Aristotle conceives of virtuous actions themselves as fine.

If we turn to Aristotle's detailed discussions of the individual virtues and the various references he makes here to the fine as an object of choice and feature of action, I submit we have reason to suppose that for Aristotle fineness is also a feature of virtuous actions themselves, and not only actions that are virtuously performed. First, Aristotle's repeated references to acting for the sake of the fine in his discussions of courage, temperance, generosity and magnificence, all occur within the context of explaining how the virtuous agent gets her action right, where the specification is quite clearly of the thing to be done. So, he writes of the temperate agent that:

hence the temperate person's appetitive part must agree with reason; for both aim at the fine, and the temperate person desires the right things, in the right ways, at the right times, which is just what reason also orders.

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 (1119b15-18).

Or again, of the generous agent he writes that:

for it is more proper to virtue to do good than to receive good, and more proper to do fine things than not to do shameful things; and clearly giving implies doing good and doing fine action, while taking implies receiving well or not doing something shameful.

τῆς γὰρ ἀρετῆς μᾶλλον τὸ εὖ ποιεῖν ἢ τὸ εὖ πάσχειν, καὶ τὰ καλὰ πράττειν μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ αἰσχρὰ μὴ πράττειν: οὐκ ἄδηλον δ' ὅτι τῇ μὲν δόσει ἔπεται τὸ εὖ ποιεῖν καὶ τὸ καλὰ πράττειν, τῇ δὲ λήψει τὸ εὖ πάσχειν ἢ μὴ αἰσχροπραγεῖν (1120a11-15).

In the first passage, for the temperate person's appetites to aim at the fine appears to consist in their being for the right things, in the right ways, at the right time; in the second passage, meanwhile, Aristotle is clearly concerned with acts of giving and receiving, where giving is regarded as the finer action. Both strongly indicate that his focus is on the thing done, on the virtuous action itself.

The connection between the fine and concrete virtuous acts is noticeable in at least two other contexts. In Aristotle's discussion of the virtue of magnificence, he writes that that the magnificent agent, when deciding how to spend her money, will "think about the finest and most fitting way to spend than about the cost or about the cheapest way to do it (πῶς κάλλιστον καὶ πρεπωδέστατον, σκέψαιτ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ πόσου καὶ πῶς ἐλαχίστου)" (1122b8-10); this remark

strongly suggests that there are ways of spending itself that are fine (that is, ‘magnificent’ ways) and which can be contrasted with the kind of spending that would be determined by miserly concerns about cost. It might be objected that here the ‘way’ (πῶς) the magnificent agent seeks to spend is ‘magnificently’ (where to act ‘magnificently’ would be to act fulfilling the conditions of 1105a31-33) but again the context of the discussion strongly points to the ‘way’ as having to do with the thing that is to be done. In the discussion that follows, Aristotle goes on to give examples of the great and fine deeds (ἔργον δὲ τὸ μέγα καὶ καλόν, 1122b16) in which the magnificent agent’s excellence is displayed, and lists things like dedications, sacrifices, or providing splendid choruses and feasts for the city (1122b19-23).

Finally, at the close of *NE* III 7 and his discussion of courage, Aristotle summarises his argument thus far claiming that “courage is a mean about what inspires confidence and what is frightening in conditions we have described; it chooses and stands firm because that is fine or because anything else is shameful (ἡ ἀνδρεία μεσότης ἐστὶ περὶ θαρραλέα καὶ φοβερὰ, ἐν οἷς εἴρηται, καὶ ὅτι καλὸν αἰρεῖται καὶ ὑπομένει, ἢ ὅτι αἰσχρὸν τὸ μὴ)” (1116a10-12). Once again, the connection here between the fine and standing firm serves as evidence that, on Aristotle’s view, virtuous actions themselves, and not only virtuously performed actions, can count as fine.

My suggestion, then, is that it is not only clear that the activity of the mature virtuous agent counts as fine, but that Aristotle’s remarks indicate that fineness is a quality of virtuous actions themselves, and not only actions that are virtuously performed. As such, it would be possible on this view for a student of virtue to perform fine actions. This, I think, also helps to make better sense of Aristotle’s claim in *NE* X 9 that “it is necessary then that character must be present already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is fine and hating what is disgraceful (δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προϋπάρχειν πῶς οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρὸν)” (1179b29-30). For if fineness was only a feature of virtuously performed action, it is hard to see how the learner could at such an early stage love *this*, and have ‘acquired a taste’ for this (see 1179b15), having not yet achieved this end herself. And my further suggestion, then, is that this is the value in the virtuous actions that the student performs, that in so performing she comes to grasp. Before we examine this idea further, however, let us consider briefly why it is that virtuous actions, even when not virtuously performed, may be said to have this quality.⁸

⁸ Irwin notes that “we might argue that Aristotle’s silence about the nature of the fine is not a mere oversight but an important part of his view. Perhaps the virtuous person can give no further description of what makes an action fine, and perhaps Aristotle thinks no further description is to be given; all we can do is rely on the trained perception of the virtuous person to find the fine and admirable actions” (1986, p.123). Nevertheless, Irwin submits that

5.3.1 THE FINE FEATURES OF VIRTUOUS ACTIONS

At this point it will be helpful to draw on Richardson-Lear's insightful discussion of the fine and its connection to moral virtue.⁹ Richardson-Lear begins her examination of the fine with the quasi-definition Aristotle offers in *Metaphysics* XIII 3 where he writes that the fine consists in order (τάξις), symmetry (συμμετρία), and definiteness or boundedness (τὸ ὀρισμένον) (*Met.* 1078a36-b1). Evidence of each of these features can be found in Aristotle's discussion of fine things within the changeable world, but also she suggests within Aristotle's discussion of virtuous action.¹⁰ This, she argues, is particularly salient in his description of the mean in action from *NE* II 6 onwards.

Order in virtuous actions is displayed in their orientation towards some good (2006, pp.121-122), whilst the boundedness of virtuous actions becomes apparent when we think of them as a mean. This thought, Richardson-Lear suggests, is evident in Aristotle's claim in *NE* II 6 that "there are many ways of missing the mark (for as the Pythagoreans used to represent it, the bad belongs to the unlimited [τοῦ ἀπείρου], but the good belongs to the limited [τοῦ πεπερασμένου]), but there is only one way of getting it right" (1106b28-31). Richardson-Lear also helpfully draws our attention to the way in which they display a certain symmetry, for, as she writes:

their parts are scaled to each other proportionately to the task at hand. When a just person allocates honours, he balances the rewards in his gift against the merit of the citizens. Or when a good-tempered person reacts to mistreatment, he gets angry in proportion to the severity of the offense, the intention of the offender, and his own sense of dignity (2006, p.120).

"[Aristotle's] remarks about the fine, if carefully examined, allow us to form a more explicit view of the property that the virtuous person detects" (1986, p.124).

⁹ See also Cooper ([1996] 1999). Moss (2012, ch8) follows Richardson-Lear in much of her discussion.

¹⁰ Richardson-Lear argues that these phenomena are bound up with the idea of effective teleological order. Evidence that the *kalon* as 'order' or *taxis* is to be understood in terms of a thing's arrangement for the sake of its end can be found in, for example, the *Parts of Animals*, where Aristotle claims that all living things, reveal something beautiful and elicit pleasure in us at the presence of the fine, because they are organised for the sake of an end (645a21-6). Richardson-Lear draws our attention also to *Politics* VII where Aristotle informs us that a fine city is one whose size is limited by its proper order (1326a33ff), which she argues should be understood as realised in the city's fulfilling its function.

Once we see that the fine as order is effective teleological structure, Richardson-Lear argues that we can better see how the fine as symmetry and as definiteness also consist in an object's orientation to its good. Again in the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that something displays symmetry when the size of its parts conduce to its benefit (1284b8-22), and in the *Politics* VII passage referenced above, we can also see that Aristotle is concerned not only that a city is well ordered but that its magnitude does not fall below or exceed a certain limit in size, for to do so would negatively affect its functioning. For more examples see Richardson-Lear (2004, pp.1246-130; 2006, pp.118-120).

Warren (2014, Ch.3) discusses order and magnitude in relation to the fine, and the pleasure that attend these, in the *Poetics*.

So virtuous actions, considered in terms of hitting the mean, display a certain order, symmetry and boundedness. But we might at this point also wish to supplement Richardson-Lear's account with a claim of Aristotle's in the *Eudemian Ethics* (one to which Richardson-Lear herself draws attention in her (2004) discussion). In this passage Aristotle writes that fine things accord with worth (κατ' ἀξίαν) and are fitting or appropriate (πρέπον):¹¹

Goods are fine when the aim in acting and choosing them is fine. That is why the natural goods are fine for the noble man. For the just is fine and this accords with worth; this man is worthy of these things. What is fitting is also fine, and these things (wealth, high-born status and power) are suitable for him.

καλὰ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὅταν, οὗ ἕνεκα πράττουσι καὶ αἰροῦνται, καλὰ ἦ, διότι τῷ καλῷ κάγαθῷ καλά ἐστὶ τὰ φύσει ἀγαθὰ. καλὸν γὰρ τὸ δίκαιον: τοῦτο δὲ τὸ κατ' ἀξίαν: ἄξιός δ' οὗτος τούτων. καὶ τὸ πρέπον καλόν: πρέπει δὲ ταῦτα τούτῳ, πλοῦτος εὐγένεια δύναμις (1249a8-10).¹²

The connection between the fine and worth and fittingness are made evident in Aristotle's discussion of magnificence. Aristotle introduces the virtue by pointing to the connection between magnificence and what is fitting: that magnificence has to do with what is fitting to scale "its very name indicates: it consists in spending that is fitting in scale (αθάπερ γὰρ τοῦνομα αὐτὸ ὑποσημαίνει, ἐν μεγέθει πρέπουσα δαπάνη ἐστίν)" (1122a22-24). But more revealingly still he writes that the magnificent agent, in contrast to both stingy and vulgar agents:

is like the skilled craftsperson, for he is able to observe what is fitting, and to spend large amounts in an appropriate way. For as we said at the start, a state is defined by its activities and its objects; now the magnificent person's expenditures are large and fitting; so too are the results, since this is what makes the expense large and fitting to the result. Hence the result must be worthy of the expense, and the expense worthy of, or even in excess of, the result. And the magnificent person will spend in this way for the sake of the fine, for this is common to the virtues.

ὁ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπῆς ἐπιστήμωνι ἔοικεν: τὸ πρέπον γὰρ δύναται θεωρῆσαι καὶ δαπανῆσαι μεγάλα ἐμμελῶς. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν ἀρχῇ εἶπομεν, ἡ ἕξις ταῖς ἐνεργείαις ὀρίζεται, καὶ ὧν ἐστίν. αἱ δὲ τοῦ μεγαλοπρεποῦς δαπάναι μεγάλα καὶ πρέπουσαι. τοιαῦτα δὲ καὶ τὰ ἔργα: οὕτω γὰρ ἔσται μέγα δαπάνημα καὶ πρέπον τῷ ἔργῳ. ὥστε τὸ μὲν ἔργον τῆς δαπάνης ἄξιον δεῖ εἶναι, τὴν δὲ δαπάνην τοῦ ἔργου, ἢ καὶ ὑπερβάλλειν. δαπανήσει δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὁ μεγαλοπρεπῆς τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα κοινὸν γὰρ τοῦτο ταῖς ἀρεταῖς (1122a34-1122b7).

Not only does the magnificent agent discern what is fitting, but Aristotle makes explicit that it is by spending in this way that the magnificent agent aims at the fine.

¹¹ For a different account of the fineness of virtuous action, which appeals to its directedness towards the common good, see Irwin (1986). For persuasive arguments against Irwin's interpretation, however, see Richardson-Lear (2004, 2006) and Cooper ([1996] 1999).

¹² At *Topics* V 5 he defines the *kalon* as the fitting (135a13).

Aristotle's discussions reveal, however, that to act in this way and so to perform fine actions is extremely demanding. And the demandingness of this picture allows us to make partial sense of his claim in *NE II 1*, that an agent must perform actions well if they are to become virtuous: to perform an action in a given sphere well requires, at the very least, that it be performed at the right time, to the right person, in the right way, and so forth, and only in meeting these does the action count as fine. But when these conditions are met, and the action performed is a fine one, this value is something that the agent can perceive; thus contributing to the development of virtue, as I will explain.

5.4 THE FINE AS PERCEPTIBLE

I have argued thus far that fineness is a property of virtuous action, a property connected, amongst other things, with the fittingness of such action. I want now to suggest that in the case of virtuous action, the agent's grasp of the fine is perceptual, and comes about through her performance of virtuous actions.

The features of particular virtuous actions (which have to do with facts about situation, and which will in turn include facts about the patient, the agent, and so forth)¹³ which make them fitting, etc. and so constitute their fineness, are features which can be perceived by an agent. But I suggest that Aristotle would also grant that the fineness itself of virtuous action can thus be perceived.¹⁴ This might, perhaps, be a thought that will be difficult for some modern readers of Aristotle to comprehend; at least those who operate with a view of perception where what are properly perceived are simply sensory properties such as colours and sounds. But Aristotle's

¹³ These facts about the agent are not the same facts that determine whether an action is virtuously performed or not. I mean here rather facts about the agent such as how much money she has, the relation she stands in to the patient and so forth. On this, Brown writes:

I don't want to deny that there are characteristics of the agent relevant to what the excellent response in a given situation will be. To adapt an example from *NE IX 2*, if A is approached by B for a loan, the correct response will depend in large part on whether B formerly lent A money or did A some other service. Again, if A sees B insulting C, the appropriate response will depend in part on whether A, B and C are related or complete strangers. And obviously whether your conduct counts as generous depends on how wealthy you are; as Aristotle says, generosity (*to eleutherion*) depends on the state of the giver, but this is immediately glossed as: it is in accordance with one's wealth (*NE 1120b6-9*). Such facts about agents are indeed relevant, but I suggest it is far more helpful to regard them as parts of the different situations which merit different responses (1997, p.86).

¹⁴ To say that fineness is something that can be perceived is not to say that it is not also something that could be grasped by the intellect. Presumably, this is how the fineness of mathematical theorems is grasped. Moreover, it may be that we can subsequently form thoughts (in the intellectual sense of thought) about the fineness of virtuous action. In the case of virtuous actions, however, I submit that a full appreciation of their fineness (such that this motivates an agent, as I will discuss below) is something that requires that the fineness of such actions be perceived, and that this comes about through their performance, as I will discuss below.

discussions of our perceptual capacity, notably in *De Anima*, make clear that perception for him is rich, and can be of more than narrow sensory properties such as colours and sounds. At *De Anima* II 6 Aristotle categorises the objects of perception as ‘proper’, ‘common’, and ‘coincidental’, and in doing so points to the difference in the way that the perception of colours or sounds and perception of objects differ in manner.¹⁵ Aristotle writes that “something is said to be an object of perception co-incidentally if, for example, that white thing is the son of Diares” (418a20). And as Shields, for example, rightly notes of this passage “in so speaking Aristotle is not maintaining that it is improper linguistically or otherwise to talk of *perceiving* [a coincidental object such as] *a red Jaguar*. On the contrary, he is allowing that we perceive such objects, but not in the manner of exclusive [that is, ‘proper’] or common objects” (2016, p.227).¹⁶ So Aristotle’s conception of perception is already as of something richer than the mere perception of properties such as colours, sounds or shapes.

But Aristotle’s various discussions of the fine and the good in both the ethical and psychological works reveal moreover that moral properties are things which, for him, can be perceived. The virtuous agent, for example, not only perceives her friends, but perceives their being and perceives that this is good (τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος, *NE* 1170b9). In the *Politics* too Aristotle remarks that it is peculiar to humans that they can perceive the good and the bad, the just and unjust and other phenomena like this (τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν)” (1253a15-18). So, as Achtenberg puts it:

Parallel to the common perception of, say, a human being as one or moving is the common perception of a thing, person, or state of affairs of some particular sort as good (or beautiful) (2002, p.179).

Indeed, the difference between this kind of perception and the perception of the proper objects of perception is made explicit in a difficult passage towards the end of Book VI:

¹⁵ Proper objects of perception are those that are perceived only through one sensory modality, such as colour for sight, sound for hearing, flavour for taste (418a11-14). Common objects meanwhile can be perceived through more than one sensory modality, and include motion, rest, number, shape and magnitude (418a16-18).

¹⁶ And Shields continues to explain:

nor does he maintain that one constructs co-incident objects of perception from perceptual data derived from exclusive objects; still less does he imply that one somehow infers the existence of co-incident objects from the several perceptions of exclusive objects (2016, p.227).

From the fact that the latter relation is of being ‘co-incident’ does not entail that the co-incident object is not something that can be perceived. The co-incident perception is still a perception (κατὰ συμβεβηκός γὰρ τούτου αἰσθάνεται). See also *NE* 1113a1: “Nor yet do we deliberate about particular facts, for instance, Is this object a loaf? Or, Is this loaf properly baked? For these are matters of perceptions (αἰσθησεως γὰρ ταῦτα).”

Phronēsis is of the last thing, which is an object of perception, not of scientific knowledge. This is not the perception of proper objects, but the sort by which we perceive that the last among mathematical objects is a triangle; for it will stop there too. However, this is more a case of perception than *phronēsis*, but it is of another form [i.e. than perception of the proper objects of perception].

ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἐσχάτου, οὗ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ' αἴσθησις, οὐχ ἡ τῶν ἰδίων, ἀλλ' οἷα αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι τὸ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ἔσχατον τρίγωνον: στήσεται γὰρ κάκει. ἀλλ' αὕτη μᾶλλον αἴσθησις ἢ φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ' ἄλλο εἶδος (1142a26-30).

The perceptibility of the fineness of virtuous action is something that is made clear in at least two passages. In Book 1, in the course of his discussion of fortune and misfortune, Aristotle writes that

But even [in circumstances where the virtuous person suffers misfortunes] the fine shines through, whenever someone bears many severe misfortunes with good temper, not because he feels no distress, but because he is noble and magnanimous.

ὅμως δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτοις διαλάμπει τὸ καλόν, ἐπειδὴν φέρη τις εὐκόλως πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας ἀτυχίας, μὴ δι' ἀναλγησίαν, ἀλλὰ γεννάδας ὦν καὶ μεγαλόψυχος (1100b30-33).

The fine, this passage reveals, is something that 'shines through' (διαλάμπει), and Aristotle's choice of perceptual language here is revealing. Aristotle again adopts perceptual language at the end of the *Ethics* when discussing the grasp, or lack thereof, of the fineness of virtuous action by those who have not been well brought up:

But [arguments] are unable to turn the many towards what is fine and good. For the many do not naturally obey shame but fear; nor do they avoid bad things not because of disgrace but because of punishments. For living by passion they pursue their own pleasures and the means to obtain them, fleeing the opposing pains, having no idea of what is fine, that is what is truly pleasant, having never tasted it. What argument could turn around people like this?

τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἀδυνατεῖν πρὸς καλοκαγαθίαν προτρέψασθαι. οὐ γὰρ πεφύκασιν αἰδοῖ πειθαρχεῖν ἀλλὰ φόβῳ, οὐδ' ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν φαύλων διὰ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας: πάθει γὰρ ζῶντες τὰς οἰκείας ἡδονὰς διώκουσι καὶ δι' ὧν αὐταὶ ἔσσονται, φεύγουσι δὲ τὰς ἀντικειμένας τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡδέος οὐδ' ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, ἀγευστοὶ ὄντες. τοὺς δὲ τοιοῦτους τίς ἂν λόγος μεταρρυθμίσει; (1179b11-16).

Importantly, this passage not only indicates that fineness in action is something that can be perceived, something which can be 'tasted', as it were, but given the context of the discussion suggests that only those who have been well brought up, which we know consists in having *practised* virtuous actions, will have acquired this taste for the fine. The suggestion seems to be that this perception is not available to those who have not themselves performed virtuous actions, and in having actually performed these actions, perceived their fineness. One may be told that

such-and-such action is fine, but without having practised it oneself, one does not ‘taste’ the fineness, as it were.¹⁷

It is worth noting that a different view of the virtuous agent’s grasp of the fine has been proposed by Coope (2012). In the course of explaining why ethical virtue is necessary for *phronēsis*, and why the possession of bad appetites might imply a specifically *rational* failing in an agent, Coope argues that a virtuous agent, but not a self-controlled agent, takes a specifically rational pleasure in the fineness of virtuous action, which follows from her having rationally grasped the fineness of virtuous action (2012, p.154-157).¹⁸ In support of her claim that the virtuous agent’s grasp of the fineness of virtuous action is a rational grasp, Coope notes, as per §5.3.1 above, that the fine features of virtuous actions are those that make an action count as mean, and that the capacity to discern that an action is in accord with the mean is a rational capacity, for it is a capacity that Aristotle assigns to the practically wise person as such (2012, p.155).

The pleasure taken in fine action (which we will discuss presently) Coope thus argues is a distinctly rational pleasure, which she takes to be strongly indicated by Aristotle’s remarks on the relation between pleasure and perceptual or intellectual activity (2012, p.156). That it is one’s rational part that is pleased by the fineness of virtuous action Coope takes to be confirmed, moreover, by Aristotle’s remarks on being a self-lover in *NE IX 8*, in which Aristotle contrasts the person who is typically regarded as a self-lover in so far as she gratifies her appetites and in general the non-rational part of the soul (1168b19-21), and the person who is properly speaking a self-lover,

¹⁷ Something like this thought, is perhaps in the background of Burnyeat’s (1980) discussion:

you need a good upbringing not simply in order that you may have someone around to tell you what is noble and just – you do need that... – but you need also to be guided in your conduct so that by doing the things you are told are noble and just you will discover that what you have been told is *true*, what you may begin taking on trust you can come to know for yourself. ...You can say, perhaps, “I have learned that it is just to share my belongings with others”, and mean it in a way that someone who has merely been told this cannot, even if he believes it – except in the weak sense in which “I have learned such-and-such” means simply that such-and-such was the content of the instruction given by parent or teacher (1980, p.74).

Burnyeat famously stresses the importance of learning to take proper pleasure in virtuous actions, and just how to understand the connection between pleasure and the fine which he emphasises has been a matter of much debate since the publication of his paper. The implication of Burnyeat’s discussion, however, is that the grasp of the fineness of virtuous action – the kind had by the lover of the noble in *NE X 9* – is not a grasp that could come about through instruction, but only through the practice of virtuous actions.

I may be told, and may believe, that such-and-such actions are just and noble, but I have not really learned for myself (taken to heart, made second nature to me) that they have this intrinsic value until I have learned to value (love) them for it, with the consequence that I take pleasure in doing them. To understand and appreciate the value that makes them enjoyable in themselves I must learn for myself to enjoy them, and that does take time and practice – in short, habituation (1980, p.78).

¹⁸ Richardson-Lear too focuses on intellectual pleasure in the fine (2006, p.131), though she also repeatedly emphasises that the goodness and order of mean actions are things that will become ‘apparent’ to an agent.

who gratifies her rational part (1168b33-34). She continues to note that “it is by acting finely that one cherishes this part of oneself: ‘in doing fine things, he [the good man] will himself be benefitted and will benefit others’ (1169a11-13)” (2012, p.157).

Now, as noted in n.14 above, I do not wish to deny that fineness is something that could be grasped by the intellect, nor indeed that the fineness of virtuous action is something of which one might ultimately come to have an intellectual grasp.¹⁹ The apparently rational pleasure taken in the fine by a self-lover proper may perhaps represent a later stage of development, or a distinctive feature of a mature agent. But I do not believe the above passages show decisively that the virtuous agent’s grasp of the fineness of virtuous action is purely a rational or intellectual grasp, nor that the fineness of virtuous action is not something to be perceived.

Taking Aristotle’s discussion of discerning the mean in action first, whilst the capacity to discern mean action is a capacity that is assigned to the *phronimos* as such, it is worth noting that the *phronimos* is characterised by Aristotle not only as an agent with correct reason, but as we saw in the passage quoted above (1142a26-30), an agent with a particular perceptual ability. The *phronimos* is one who, importantly, *sees* what to do in particular circumstances. As Coope notes, of course, Aristotle states that the mean in action is something that is determined by correct reason (ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ᾧ ἄν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν, 1106b36-1107a2) but again, even if it is the case that the mean is *determined* by correct reason, this does not show that the fineness of virtuous action, when actualised, is not something that is perceived by an agent.²⁰

We have already taken note of Aristotle’s use of perceptual language when describing an agent’s grasp of the fine, and in the following section we will see that Aristotle draws an important analogy between the virtuous agent’s delight in the fine and the delight that a musical person takes in fine melodies; there I draw on the passage to support the thought that in perceiving the fineness of virtuous action, a virtuous agent also takes pleasure in such action, but for the present I take it

¹⁹ Moss, who also argues that the virtuous agent – and in particular the learner’s – grasp of the fine is perceptual, allows too that the fully virtuous agent takes both intellectual and perceptual pleasure in the fine, which like Coope she takes to be evidenced by 1168b29-30. She argues, however, that the moral habituee takes perceptual pleasure in the fine, and it is this that shapes her character (2012, p.209).

²⁰ It is worth asking, furthermore, what kind of rational or intellectual grasp of the fineness of virtuous action a virtuous agent, and perhaps also a habituee, might have? The question becomes pertinent when we ask why it is that simply believing that actions are fine does not appear sufficient to motivate an agent towards fine action. Coope argues that “if one fails to take pleasure in the exercise of perceptual or reasoning faculties, this must be either because the object apprehended is not fine or because one is not properly apprehending it. From this it follows that the failure to take pleasure in an action that is in fact fine must always imply a failure properly to *grasp* its fineness” (2012, pp.158-159). I will argue in §5.6 below, that this explains why not all agents take pleasure in the fineness of virtuous actions, for they either fail to perform fine actions or fail to perceive their fineness. The question in the case of the ‘rational grasp’ view is: what does it take to properly grasp, in a rational or intellectual sense, the fineness of virtuous actions?

to be important that Aristotle chooses to draw an analogy with a case in which a subject's grasp of the fine is presumably also perceptual. Indeed, the virtuous agent grasps the fineness of, and is pleased by, her actions 'just as' (καθάπερ) the lover of music is. Had Aristotle wished to emphasise the intellectual nature of an agent's grasp of fine action, he might have chosen a more paradigmatically intellectual example.

We have already seen that, whilst making certain revealing remarks, Aristotle says little explicitly about the connection he takes there to be between virtuous action, the fine, and how an agent comes to grasp this value; for this reason, as I have already stated, a degree of speculation is required. Thus, the speculative picture I propose is as follows: for Aristotle, there are certain actions – those which hit the mean and are *prepon*, etc. – which themselves are fine. By this I do not mean simply that the consequences of so acting are fine,²¹ but that the actions themselves, the doing of them, is something that Aristotle takes to be fine. Perhaps we might say, in Aristotelian terms, that a potential fineness is actualised in the doing of a fine action or engagement in a fine activity. And it is for this reason that perception of the fineness of virtuous action, of the sort enjoyed by the lover of the fine in *NE* 1 8 and *X* 9, is acquired only through the doing of virtuous actions; that is, in their actualisation, effected by the agent of the action.

Why it is that an agent has to perform virtuous actions herself in order to perceive their fineness, as I am proposing, is a difficult question. Again, Aristotle says so little about the perception of the fine in virtuous action that any answer will admittedly be speculative. But I suggest that it has to do with the fact that these actions, as actions, are not *mere* changes or events, but acts of agency – as I claimed in Chapter 2. It is, perhaps, because the fineness is connected with acts of agency that it can only be experienced from the first personal perspective.²²

This raises the question, of course, as to the possibility of perceiving or in any other way apprehending fineness in the actions of others. For if the suggestion is that the fineness of virtuous action is only something that can be perceived through one's own performance of such action, this would suggest then that it could not be perceived in the action of others. One might think

²¹ See Coope (2012, p.153, n.25).

²² Perhaps the perception of the fineness in virtuous action is like the pleasure taken in activities such as skiing (to use Burnyeat's example), activities which we need to engage in *ourselves* in order to experience what makes them pleasant. We might contrast this with the fineness in music, which does not have to do with agency in the same way as virtuous action, and thus allows for a listener other than the performer to hear the fineness in that music. There may, however, also be a fine quality to *playing* music, which might thus only be perceptible by the performer – though, as I will argue before, this fineness might be something that can be recognised by other observers.

that this is in tension with a famous passage that is found within Aristotle's discussion of friendship, where he writes that:

Now if being happy consists in living and being active; the activity of the good person is excellent, and pleasant in itself, as we said at the beginning; what is our own is pleasant; and we are able to observe our neighbours more than ourselves, and to observe their actions more than our own; and the actions of decent people who are friends are pleasant to those who are good, having both [of these attributes, i.e. being good and 'one's own'] which are naturally pleasant.

εἰ δὲ τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ζῆν καὶ ἐνεργεῖν, τοῦ δ' ἀγαθοῦ ἡ ἐνέργεια σπουδαία καὶ ἡδέια καθ' αὐτήν, καθάπερ ἐν ἀρχῇ εἴρηται, ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον τῶν ἡδέων, θεωρεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς πέλας δυνάμεθα ἢ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων πράξεις ἢ τὰς οἰκείας, αἱ τῶν σπουδαίων δὲ πράξεις φίλων ὄντων ἡδέια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (ἄμφω γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ τῇ φύσει ἡδέα) (1169b30-1170a1).

Although Aristotle does not mention the fineness of a friend's action in this passage, it must nevertheless be a feature of the decent person's action, and indeed one of the things that makes it naturally pleasant.²³ For this reason we might suppose that the pleasure that a virtuous agent takes in observing her virtuous friend's action will be a pleasure in perceiving the fineness of her friend's action. And we might then suppose that this passage undermines my claim that the fineness of virtuous action is something that is grasped only through one's own practice of such action.

But there are a few important points to note in response. First, whilst we can observe (θεωρεῖν) the actions of others, Aristotle does not write here that the fineness of others' action is something that the virtuous agent perceives. It might, perhaps must, be the case that one could *recognise* the fineness of another's action, but this recognition depends on an original perception of the fine, which is perceived from the first personal perspective. When a virtuous agent recognises the fineness in another's action, such action can be an object of pleasure for that agent, but the mode of apprehension of the fineness of such action and experience of what I will argue is a corresponding pleasure, is different.

If it were the case, however, that in this case a virtuous agent does in fact perceive the fineness in her friend's action, it is worth taking note of another important feature of this example. The case in question is the particular case of virtuous friendships, and Aristotle famously tells us that a friend is "another self" (ἕτερον αὐτὸν, 1169b6-7). Furthermore, Aristotle makes clear in the above passage that the actions of our friends have the quality of being 'one's own' (τὸ οἰκεῖον). It may be, then, that if a virtuous agent is able not only to recognise, but to in fact perceive the fineness of a

²³ Moss discusses this passage at length (2012, pp.212ff) and draws on it as evidence for her view that pleasure is experienced in the *observation* of virtuous actions. I will discuss Moss' view further in §5.6 below.

virtuous friend's action, that this has importantly to do with the fact that this friend is another self, and that the virtuous agent's perspective on her friend's action, being that of another self, is in a sense first personal rather than third personal.

Before we examine further the relation between an agent's grasp of the fineness of virtuous action and the pleasure taken in such action, I wish to make one final qualification. I have claimed that the fineness of virtuous action is something to be perceived, and something that is perceived in the very performance of virtuous actions but that should not be taken to suggest that an agent could not remember the fineness of virtuous action, nor anticipate this in future actions. Again, Aristotle's remarks on memory strongly suggest that a virtuous agent must be able to do this,²⁴ and in the following chapter I will also argue that through our capacity for *phantasia*, we are able also to envisage the prospect of fine activity too. As we will see, given the close relationship for Aristotle between perception and *phantasia*, that something is first perceived and later remembered or anticipated is perfectly compatible with the picture painted so far, and indeed just what we should expect. So what, then, is it that happens when a learner perceives the fineness of virtuous action in the course of her moral habituation?

5.5 PLEASURE IN PERCEIVING THE FINE

We saw in Aristotle's discussion in *NE* I 8, quoted in §5.3 above, that the virtuous agent takes pleasure in the fine, and this is a thought to which I now want to return. One might wonder if this simply means that the things that a virtuous agent takes pleasure in simply happen to be fine things, that she loves fine things only extensionally, and various commentators have sought to explain how a learner can be brought to take pleasure in fine actions.²⁵ In Chapter 3 we surveyed a number of attempts to explain the training of the learner's motivational capacities by appeal to

²⁴ In his discussion of friendship and self-sufficiency in *NE* 9.4, Aristotle informs us that the virtuous agent will enjoy spending time on his own, since he is able to enjoy his pleasant memories:

Someone like this wants to spend time with himself, for he does this with pleasure. And the memories of what he has done are pleasing and his anticipations of what is to come are good; and those sorts [of memories and anticipations] are pleasant. Moreover, he has plenty of things to contemplate in his mind. And he shares his sufferings and his pleasures with himself in particular, for the same thing is always painful or pleasant and is not pleasant at one time but not another; for, in a word, he is without regret (συνδιάγειν τε ὁ τοιοῦτος ἑαυτῷ βούλεται· ἡδέως γὰρ αὐτὸ ποιεῖ· τῶν τε γὰρ πεπραγμένων ἐπιτερπεῖς αἱ μνήμαι, καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἐλπίδες ἀγαθαί, αἱ τοιαῦται δ' ἡδέϊαι. καὶ θεωρημάτων δ' εὐπορεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ. συναλγεῖ τε καὶ συνήδεται μάλισθ' ἑαυτῷ πάντοτε γὰρ ἔστι τὸ αὐτὸ λυπηρόν τε καὶ ἡδύ, καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοτ' ἄλλο· ἀμεταμέλητος γὰρ ὡς εἰπεῖν) (1166a23–9).

For a discussion of this passage, and the pleasures and pains of memory, see Warren (2014, Ch 7).

²⁵ Burnyeat (1980), Engberg-Pedersen (1983), Broadie (1991), Cooper ([1996] 1999), Achtenberg (2002), Grönroos (2007); Achtenberg (2002) and Moss (2012) as we will see argue for a tighter connection between one's perception of something as fine, and the pleasure one takes in that thing.

the power of repetition either to render things pleasant that were once painful, or to establish associations between existing pleasures and virtuous actions. There, these accounts were considered as examples of ‘mechanical’ accounts of the learner’s habituation, in which no appeal is made to the engagement of the learner’s various cognitive capacities in her development. But we can see more clearly now another reason that these accounts have been found unsatisfactory. For they fail to account for the particular pleasure that Aristotle makes clear a virtuous agent takes in virtuous action (see esp. *NE* 1174b14-16), a pleasure that clearly has to do with its fineness. Moreover, they offer no explanation of how a learner might then come to choose virtuous actions for their own sake, since her pleasure has little to do with the nature of virtuous action itself.

But Aristotle’s remarks on the connection between pleasure and the fine suggest that a virtuous agent’s pleasure in fine actions is not merely extensional; his characterisation of virtuous agents as lovers of the fine (οἱ φιλοκάλοι) at 1099a13 strongly implies that it is the fine, *qua* fine that they take pleasure in. Indeed, recall the passage from *NE* X 9 quoted above, in which Aristotle contrasts the many who do not obey shame, but fear. These he contrasts with the well brought up who have been habituated into “enjoying and hating finely... loving what is fine and objecting to what is shameful (πρὸς τὸ καλῶς χαίρειν καὶ μισεῖν... στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρὸν)” (1179b25-31). That those who rejoice in fine things are contrasted with those who do the right actions on account of fear and not on account of shame, strongly suggests that pleasure of the former is taken in the very fineness of their actions, and not that they take pleasure in actions that only so happen to be fine.²⁶

Indeed, Aristotle writes that the things that please a lover of the fine are pleasant by nature (τοῖς δὲ φιλοκάλοις ἐστὶν ἡδέα τὰ φύσει ἡδέα, 1099a13), and moreover that actions in accordance with the virtues are pleasant in their own right (...καθ’ αὐτὰς ἂν εἶεν αἱ κατ’ ἀρετὴν πράξεις ἡδέαι, 1099a14-15). We can put this together with Aristotle’s remarks about objects of choice in *NE* II 3, where he claims that both “what is fine and what is expedient appear pleasant as well (καὶ γὰρ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ συμφέρον ἡδὺ φαίνεται)” (1105a1). The strong implication of these passages then is that the perception of something as fine is, for Aristotle, pleasant, and to see it as attractive.

Indeed, this is supported in the analogy Aristotle draws between the delight that people take in fine music and the delight the virtuous agent takes in virtuous action. He writes that:

The virtuous agent’s activity will be most continuous, it will also be pleasant in itself, as it must be for the blessedly happy person. For the virtuous agent, insofar as he is virtuous,

²⁶ See also Moss (2012, p.208).

delights in actions in accordance with virtue, and is disgusted by those that come from vice. Just as the musical person is pleased by fine melodies and pained by bad ones.

ἔσται οὖν ἡ ἐνέργεια συνεχεστέρα, ἡδέια οὖσα καθ' αὐτήν, ὃ δεῖ περὶ τὸν μακάριον εἶναι: ὁ γὰρ σπουδαῖος, ἢ σπουδαῖος, ταῖς κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεσι χαίρει, ταῖς δ' ἀπὸ κακίας δυσχεραίνει, καθάπερ ὁ μουσικὸς τοῖς καλοῖς μέλεσιν ἡδεῖται, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς φαύλοισι λυπεῖται (1170a7-11).

To perceive a piece of music as fine is to find it pleasant, and this is just what Aristotle takes to be the case in the case of virtue too. Interestingly, the connection between pleasure in fine actions and music is something that Aristotle exploits in the education programme of the *Politics*, where musical education is identified as a means of teaching and habituating students to judge correctly and to delight in virtuous characters and noble actions (μανθάνειν καὶ συνεθίζεσθαι μηθὲν οὕτως ὡς τὸ κρίνειν ὀρθῶς καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν ἡθεσι καὶ ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεσιν, *Pol.* 1140a15-18).²⁷

In this respect, perception of something as fine is similar to one's perception of something as good, which Aristotle informs us, e.g. at *NE* 1170b10, is a perception that is pleasant in itself (ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη αἴσθησις ἡδέια καθ' ἑαυτήν). Indeed, Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* points to a connection between the fine and the good, writing that:

The fine is that which being chosen in itself is worthy of praise or which being good is pleasant in that it is good. If this is the fine, then virtue must necessarily be fine, for, being good, it is worthy of praise.

καλὸν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὃ ἂν δι' αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν ὄν ἐπαινετὸν ἦ, ἢ ὃ ἂν ἀγαθὸν ὄν ἡδὺ ἦ, ὅτι ἀγαθόν: εἰ δὲ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ καλόν, ἀνάγκη τὴν ἀρετὴν καλὸν εἶναι: ἀγαθὸν γὰρ ὄν ἐπαινετὸν ἐστὶν (*Rhet.* 1366a33-35).

Whilst the fine and the good are different concepts for Aristotle, he nevertheless sees them as closely connected, and the pleasure taken in fine things as being intimately connected with our perception of their goodness.²⁸ Space does not permit anything like a full examination of the connection between the fine and the good, but some remarks of Richardson-Lear's may again be helpful to draw on. Richardson-Lear notes that by explaining our pleasure in fine action in terms of its goodness, Aristotle could have in mind either of the following two thoughts: "Either the goodness of a fine thing, X, causes it to be pleasant; or A takes pleasure in X because A thinks X

²⁷ Compare Aristotle's talk of discerning (τὸ κρίνειν) here with his claim in *DA* that *aisthēsis* can discern (κρίνειν) what it receives (425a22).

For further discussion of musical education in Aristotle, see Cagnoli Fieccconi (2016).

²⁸ For further discussion, see Richardson-Lear (2006). Moss argues at length for the claim that pleasure is the perception of something's goodness in Chapter 2 of her (2012), and connects this discussion with the pleasure of perceiving the fine in her Chapter 8.

is good” (2004, p.133). And Richardson-Lear rightly, I think, acknowledges that Aristotle may well think both: given that pleasure is, for him, the apparent good (see e.g. *EE* 1235b27, *MA* 700b29), a thing’s goodness may also cause it to seem that way too. But he may also be seeking to emphasise that fine things are pleasant because they seem to those who perceive them, to be good. Richardson-Lear suggests in any case that “the experience of one’s actions as beautiful is, we might say, the mode of the virtuous person’s apprehension of their goodness” (2006, p.117).

On this view, then, it is not the case that the learner is trained – through repetition or association, say – to find virtuous actions pleasant and then to perform these on account of the pleasure that these will bring.²⁹ Rather, the learner, when she performs virtuous actions (in the way detailed below) and discriminates these as fine, will then take pleasure in these actions, for to perceive something as fine is to find it attractive.³⁰ The learner’s pleasure in effect registers the value that she perceives. And I submit that it is on account of the value that the agent perceives in virtuous action, which is registered in the pleasure she experiences, and not because she hopes to secure some pleasure, that the agent is then motivated to perform such actions.³¹

²⁹ As noted above, such accounts fail to explain how a learner thus comes to choose such actions for their own sake, for their pleasure is unconnected to the value of such action.

³⁰ An account of the connection between pleasure taken in fine activity and desiring to so act is currently being developed by David Charles (unpublished MS). Charles appeals to his (2006) reading of the following passage in *DA* 10, in which he argues that for Aristotle to see something as pleasant is the same as desiring it:

Perceiving is like saying alone or thinking [of something]. But when it is pleasant or painful, [the soul] as if making an assertion or denial, pursues or avoids [the object]. To enjoy and be pained is to be active with regards to the perceptual mean in respect of what is good or bad as such. And this is what avoidance and pursuit are when actualised. Nor is the capacity for desire and for avoidance different, neither from each other nor from the capacity for perception, although they differ in what they are. (μὲν οὖν αισθάνεσθαι ὅμοιον τῷ φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν· ὅταν δὲ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν, οἷον καταφᾶσα ἢ ἀποφᾶσα, διώκει ἢ φεύγει· καὶ ἔστι τὸ ἡδεσθαι καὶ λυπεῖσθαι τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τῇ αισθητικῇ μεσότητι πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν, ἢ τοιαῦτα. καὶ ἡ φυγὴ δὲ καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις τοῦτο ἢ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν, καὶ οὐχ ἕτερον τὸ ὀρεκτικὸν καὶ φευκτικόν, οὔτ’ ἀλλήλων οὔτε τοῦ αισθητικοῦ· ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι ἄλλο) (*DA* 431a8-15, trans. Charles).

Just as there is no difference between discriminating something as pleasant or disgusting and being attracted to it or repelled by it, Charles argues too that discriminating the fine as pleasant and taking pleasure in it are the same activity. And to take pleasure in it, will be, according to his (2006) picture, to be attracted to it. (Cf. Coope, 2012, p.159, n.34).

³¹ Indeed, Aristotle’s discussion of the different kinds of pleasures that attend different kinds of activities in *X* 5 indicate that the pleasure that attends (perceptions of) fine activities, qua fine, is a pleasure different in kind to the bodily pleasures which attend eating and drinking, and so on. Aristotle writes:

Since activities differ in degrees of decency and badness, and some are choiceworthy, some are avoided, some neither, the same holds of pleasures; for in accordance with each activity is its own proper pleasure. And so the pleasure proper to an excellent activity is decent, while the one proper to a base activity is wretched; for appetites for fine things are praiseworthy and appetites for shameful things are blameworthy. And in fact the pleasure in an activity is more proper to it than the desire for it. For the desire is distinguished from it in time and in nature; but the pleasure is close to the activity, and so little distinguished from it that there are disputes as to whether the activity is the same as the pleasure. (διαφερουσῶν δὲ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ἐπιεικεία καὶ φαυλότητι, καὶ τῶν μὲν αἰρετῶν οὐσῶν τῶν δὲ φευκτῶν τῶν δ’ οὐδετέρων, ὁμοίως ἔχουσι καὶ αἱ ἡδοναί: καθ’ ἑκάστην γὰρ ἐνέργειαν οἰκεία ἡδονὴ ἔστιν. ἡ μὲν οὖν τῇ σπουδαίᾳ οἰκεία ἐπιεικῆς, ἡ δὲ τῇ φαύλῃ μοχθηρά: καὶ γὰρ αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι τῶν μὲν καλῶν ἐπαινεταί, τῶν δ’ αἰσχρῶν ψεκταί. οἰκειότεραι δὲ ταῖς ἐνεργείαις αἱ ἐν αὐταῖς ἡδοναί τῶν ὀρέξεων: αἱ μὲν γὰρ διωρισιμεῖναι

I argued above that the fineness of virtuous actions lies in the actions themselves;³² that is, it lies in the doing of these. And my claim, as such, is that in doing virtuous actions – by doing what the virtuous agent would do – a learner will perceive the fineness of such action, and in doing so will find it attractive. Importantly, she finds it attractive and takes pleasure in it because she has perceived its value; she does not find it attractive *because* she takes pleasure in it. On this view, then, a learner does not need to be trained to take pleasure in fine action as on the views discussed above and in Chapter 3; where training is required, however, is in being so positioned as to perceive the fineness of virtuous action.

5.6 TRAINING TOWARDS PERCEIVING THE FINE

I have argued so far that fineness is an objective property of virtuous actions, there to be discovered in the performance of such actions, and that when it is perceived, an agent will thereby find such actions attractive and see them as worth going for. We may wonder, then, why we don't see more agents being struck by the fineness of virtuous action and in being so struck, seeing such action as worth going for? For the many do not enjoy virtuous actions, as Aristotle makes clear; why have these people not discovered the fineness of virtuous action and its accompanying pleasure?

The first thing to note is that performing virtuous, and so fine, actions is an extremely demanding task. This is made clear in both the discussion of the mean in action and in Aristotle's discussions of the individual virtues. It is "hard work to hit the mean (τὸ μέσον λαβεῖν ἔργον)" (1109a25); it is "no longer for everyone, nor is it easy (οὐκέτι παντὸς οὐδὲ ῥάδιον)" (1109a28-29), and for this reason "doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy and fine (τὸ εὖ καὶ σπάνιον καὶ ἐπαινετὸν καὶ καλόν)" (1109a29-30). The demandingness of virtuous action is such that not all agents manage to perform such actions, and thus do not manage to perform fine actions – there is no fineness in their action to be perceived.³³

It is in this respect that we can begin to see how the learner's imitation of a virtuous character model crucially enables her development. As I argued in the previous chapter, one of the things that such imitative activity enables is for the learner to successfully perform virtuous actions, by attending carefully to the precise nature of her model's action, and attempting to act in just the

εἰσι καὶ τοῖς χρόνοις καὶ τῇ φύσει, αἱ δὲ σύνεγγυς ταῖς ἐνεργείαις, καὶ ἀδιόριστοι οὕτως ὥστ' ἔχειν ἀμφισβήτησιν εἰ ταῦτόν ἐστιν ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς ἡδονῆς) (1175b24-33).

So the pleasure that attends perceptions of fine action will be a different kind of pleasure to that of eating, say.

³² Of course, an action's being virtuous and so fine is dependent on features of the situation and so forth; it is not the case that 'sharing' simpliciter is fine, but rather when this is the fitting thing to do, etc.

³³ Cf. Coope (2012, p.158-159).

same way in the relevant situations. Both the knowledge and practice of virtuous action afforded by imitation allow a learner to perform actions that are fine, and thus make it possible that she will perceive the fineness of this action and hence find it attractive. Those who do not have virtuous character models, or who imitate vicious agents, and so forth, will not have this opportunity available to them.

But it is not only the case that a learner needs to achieve the difficult task of performing actions that are in fact fine in order to perceive this quality in her actions, for I submit that even though the property is there to be discovered in such actions, it is not the case that it will be perceived on all occasions. We saw above that an important feature of fine things, and so of mean actions also, is that they are *prepon* – fitting, or appropriate. And as such, I submit that in order to be able to perceive the fineness of the virtuous actions she performs, the learner needs to recognise those features of the action, and the situation to which it is a response,³⁴ that make it *prepon*.³⁵ I submit that if a learner were simply to copy the actions of the virtuous agent, without attending to the features of the situation to which the virtuous agent is (or would be) responding, she would not thus be in a position to perceive the fittingness and the fineness of that action. But by seeing just what it is about the situation that calls for that precise action, and in then performing the action, the learner is able to perceive the fittingness and the fineness of her action, and so experience the pleasure in so acting.

Note that this is a different requirement on the learner's successful practice than Jimenez' requirement that the learner already act for the sake of the fine. On Jimenez' view, the learner's acting well required that she – somehow – act for the sake of the fine (with no explanation of how she first comes to grasp the fineness of virtuous action and to be motivated by this); on my view,

³⁴ As noted in n.13 above, 'situation' may also include facts about herself.

³⁵ Achtenberg (2002) proposes a similar though in important ways different account of the fineness of virtuous actions and the development of a learner's capacity to perceive this fineness which appeals to idea of their being parts of a larger whole. Achtenberg likens this appreciation of virtuous actions to the appreciation of the actions which constitute skiing. Actions such as leaning back, or speeding up are constitutive of skiing, and "through actually skiing one has new insight into various actions... one sees them as part of larger wholes in which they have new and increased value. One sees them, in other words as beautiful" (2002, p.155). Likewise, she argues, "specifically while engaging in appropriate practices, one begins to perceive aspects of those practices as constituents of or means to development or fulfillment and, thus, as beautiful or good" (2002, p.156). Achtenberg, however, goes on to talk of certain virtuous actions in terms of their being means to further goods, in a way that is perhaps misleading.

There is surely some truth to the thought that a learner will come to see the constituent parts of actions as part of a bigger whole – the handing over of her toys as part of the generous action of sharing, say – and indeed, that over the course of her practice the learner will start to see these virtuous actions also as part of the bigger whole of a well-lived life. But Achtenberg appears to overlook the importance of the fittingness of virtuous action that Aristotle's remarks in *EE* suggest we should take seriously, and her talk of seeing actions as means to further goods might lead us to overlook Aristotle's central insight that these things have an intrinsic value.

the learner's acting well consists in her getting the actions right and her attention to the morally relevant features of the situation and her action (afforded by her imitation of a virtuous character model), which in turn is a condition of her perceiving the fineness in her action.

In Chapter 3 we looked at examples of two agents whom Jimenez regarded as problematic and who were part of her motivation for proposing the account that she does, namely, the mechanical learner and the learner with a vicious motive, both of whom she supposes would surely be unsuccessful in their habituation. I believe that my view can account for these concerns. We saw in Chapter 3 that an agent who acts mechanically, and whose cognitive capacities are not engaged in the course of her practice, will not be in a position to acquire either the knowledge of virtuous action or to develop the perceptual and deliberative capacities that are required for mature virtuous activities. We can now add to this thought that such an agent will not have the requisite awareness of the situation in which she is acting and fittingness of her action, needed to perceive the fineness of virtuous action and so to value it.

But we can also similarly explain why an agent with a vicious motive will be less likely to succeed in perceiving the fineness in virtuous action. The point is not that one needs to be well motivated in order to perform a genuinely virtuous action. It is rather that an agent with a vicious motive will typically be attending to the wrong features of the situation when she acts. Such an agent may intentionally share her belongings say, and perform a fine action, but if she is motivated to do this by the prospect of the rewards she will gain, and if her attention is focused strongly on these and not, say, the delight that her sharing brings to the recipient, she may not perceive the fittingness and the fineness of that action. An agent's vicious motivations will affect, I submit, the features of a situation to which she attends. Indeed, it may also be the case that a vicious agent is motivated to focus on certain features and not others; the stingy agent who does not want to part with money is motivated *not* to attend to the people who are in need, for example.

This need not be taken to imply that on any occasion that an agent performs a virtuous action with an ulterior motive she will be unable to perceive the fineness of that action – it will, I take it, be a matter of how much that motive diverts her attention or not from what are in fact the important features of the situation. There may also be cases in which an agent performs an action with an ulterior motive, focusing on certain features of the situation (the rewards she will gain, say), but in performing the action, other features of the situation become apparent to her (they 'shine through' perhaps), such as the delight that her generous action brings to its recipient, and when these become apparent to the agent, she may then perceive the fineness of her action.

I have emphasised the importance of a learner's attentiveness to the nature of her action and the morally important features of the situation to which it is a response, in order to be in such a position as to perceive the fineness of her action and to find it thus attractive. And it is in this respect that the account of the learner's imitation of a virtuous model proposed in Chapter 4 becomes most relevant. There, I argued that in imitating a virtuous agent, a learner will not only attend closely to the nature of the agent's actions and the situations in which she acts, but that she will also be required to (imaginatively) inhabit the virtuous agent's perspective and to attempt to see situations in the way that she does. In doing so I claimed that she simultaneously achieves two things. First, she is enabled to move from a view of the world that is structured around her immediate appetites, to seeing new features of situations as what matters and as calling for a certain response. And in doing so it will not only be the case that she will not simply pursue the course of action that leads to the satisfaction of her appetites, but it will also be the case that when she performs the virtuous action, her attention will not be diverted in the ways described above.

Second, and more importantly, in adopting the virtuous agent's perspective, she will be actively attending to the features of the situation that matter and to which the virtuous action is a fitting response, and thus be enabled to perceive the fineness of virtuous action. In short, by imitating a virtuous agent, by adopting her perspective, attending closely to the nature of her action, and acting in such a way herself, the learner is positioned so as to perceive the fineness of such action, and in doing so to find it attractive. In this way, then, we can see a further significance to the priority that Aristotle appeared to grant to the virtuous agent in *NE II 4*.

Of course, having said that this appreciation of the nature of virtuous action, and its fittingness with respect to the situations which call for it, is effected through the imitation of a character model, this need not be taken to imply that the learner is alone in this process nor that she will not require help in coming to see what the virtuous agent does. As I argued at the end of Chapter 4, a learner – particularly in the early stages of her development – may require some active guidance from a mature agent. It may take, in certain circumstances, another person or persons pointing to a feature of the situation, something about another person, something about themselves, and so on, for a student to see what is important.

5.7 MOSS AND SELF-PERCEPTION

I want to end this chapter by briefly comparing this view with a similar view developed by Moss (2012). Moss too stresses the importance in moral habituation of perceiving the fineness of

virtuous action and the pleasure that attends this perception. (She argues persuasively too for the perceptual nature of our grasp of the fineness of action). For Moss, however, this pleasure is taken not in the doing of virtuous actions, but in the observation of them, and she draws on Aristotle's discussion of the pleasure of virtuous friendship in *NE* X 9 (discussed in §5.4 above) in support of this contention (2012, p.212). In the case of the learner's own action, Moss argues that what she takes pleasure in is her perception of herself as performing a fine action (2012, p.213ff).

My account, so far, has not made it a requirement of the learner's perception of fineness, or of her pleasure in this, that she has this kind of second-order awareness of herself as performing a fine action. I have argued, however, that the perception of fineness in action is achieved from the first personal perspective, and have argued moreover that the mere doing of an action is not sufficient for the perception of fineness; an awareness of the nature of action and the morally important features of the situation (which might include facts about the agent herself) will be required to perceive this.

Nevertheless, this does not rule out the possibility that Moss' account might also be true of the learner as she develops, and in particular as she becomes aware of herself as the agent of virtuous actions in the way I described towards the end of the previous chapter. The learner at this stage may not only perceive the fineness of the virtuous actions she performs, but the fineness of herself as performing those actions. As Moss rightly notes, Aristotle claims that the things which please the virtuous agent are "decent and his own" (*ἐπιεικεῖς καὶ οἰκείας*, 1170a3).

We can add to this a further thought about the mature virtuous agent. We saw clear evidence in §5.3 that the activity of the mature agent (i.e. her virtuously performed, virtuous action) is fine and pleasant, and it is plausible that Aristotle would maintain that virtuous activity is more fine than the activity of a learner. Both will perform fine actions, which have the same moral value, but in so far as the mature agent also acts knowingly, chooses these actions for their own sake and acts from a stable state, Aristotle would claim that this activity is more fine than the activity of the learner who performs fine actions but not yet in this way. And moreover, that this activity will be more pleasant (1174b18-20). Putting this together with Moss' picture, it is plausible then that the mature agent will have a second order awareness not only of herself as performing fine actions, but of herself as engaged in fine activity, and this will be attended by the most pleasure of all.

6 ACTION AND AFFORDANCES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I argued that it is through the performance of virtuous actions that a learner comes to perceive the value of such action – that is, its fineness – which makes such action worth choosing for its own sake. Aristotle’s remarks on the intimate connection between pleasure and the fine strongly suggest that when an agent perceives the fineness in virtuous action, she thereby perceives it to be attractive in a distinctive way and worth going for. We thus have the beginnings of an account of how the very practice of virtuous actions could effect a change in the motivational states of a learner, such that over time she comes to choose virtuous actions for their own sake, as Aristotle’s remarks in *NE* II 4 indicate is the case.

In this chapter I want to develop this picture further, and add further detail to the account of how the learner’s practice of virtuous actions can shape her perceptions and desires, in such a way that over time she comes to meet the conditions of virtuously performed action. We have already seen an indication in the previous chapter of the intimate relation Aristotle sees between one’s perception of activities and situations, one’s pleasures and one’s desires; the intimacy of this relation will become more apparent still in this chapter. Moreover, in coming to appreciate the intimate relations between these phenomena and, indeed, our actions, I hope to add some colour to the thought alluded to at the end of Chapter 3, that the conditions of virtuously performed action are not met piecemeal or in a sequence of discrete stages, but through the joint training of these various capacities effected through (guided) practice.

As a route into developing this picture, I want to turn away from Aristotle’s ethical writings and towards the psychological works, taking as a starting point Aristotle’s remarks on the production of action in *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima*. In these, Aristotle points to the need for the operation of at least one of our discerning faculties (that is, of perception, *phantasia*, or thought) and of one form of *orexis* (comprising *epithumia*, *thumos* and *boulēsis*)¹ for the

¹ *Prohairesis* meanwhile, is referred to both as ‘desiderative thought’ (*orektikos nous*, *NE* 1139b4-5), and as ‘thinking desire’ (*orexis dianoētikē*, *NE* 1139b4-5) or ‘deliberative desire’ (*orexis bouleutikē*, *NE* 1139a23).

production of voluntary action, but he also appears to assign a particular role to *phantasia* in what he calls the ‘preparation’ (παρασκευάζει, *MA* 702a17) of desire. Whilst Aristotle offers little further information as to the role he envisages for this capacity here, a number of insightful attempts have been made in recent literature to account for this role. In examining both Aristotle’s remarks on *phantasia*, and some of the accounts of its role in the preparation of action that have been offered in recent literature, we can shed further light not only on the issue of how perception, desire and other capacities contribute to the production of action, but how it is that through *acting* we can also shape these capacities.

6.2 ACTION, DESIRE AND *PHANTASIA*

We are seeking to understand how an agent’s desires and way of seeing things can be transformed through the practice of virtuous actions. I suggested in my opening remarks that we should turn our attention towards Aristotle’s discussions of desire and action, located in his psychological works, but before we do so I want to say a brief word about the scope of the following discussion.

In what follows, I am not concerned to develop an account of desire, for Aristotle, *simpliciter*. Aristotle’s remarks on desire occur within a variety of contexts, both ethical and more narrowly psychological, and are often made within the context of discussing different phenomena (locomotion, deliberation, *akrasia*, and so on). Thus, remarks made in one context may not be intended to apply to all cases of desiring or phenomena that Aristotle includes under the general heading ‘*orexis*’.² Certainly, I am concerned only with desires as related to action, and not those desires that are, as it were, not action-prompting. The following discussion is not intended to apply, for example, to phenomena such as hopes or idle wishes,³ though that is not to say that aspects of this discussion could not be relevant to understanding such phenomena. Indeed, the account that I eventually develop is intended specifically to apply to cases of virtuous action, and not action *per se* (though again, that it is not to claim that it could not apply to cases of non-moral action, and indeed I will develop my account by drawing on various non-moral examples).

² A fairly comprehensive analysis of Aristotle’s various discussions of desire can be found in Pearson (2012).

³ Aristotle claims that we can hope for things that cannot be secured through our own agency, but these are not things that we could for example choose (see *NE* 1111b23-24). I hope, for example, that Donald Trump will be impeached, but this is not something that I can choose. We can also wish for things we know either to be impossible (see *NE* 1111b22-23, *EE* 1225b32-3), or to be concerned with things that have happened in the past (see *NE* 1139b6ff), neither of which can be objects of choice for Aristotle. I wish that I could fly, or that Donald Trump had not won the 2016 election, but again these are not things I can choose, or which could motivate me to act.

With these restrictions in scope noted, both as regards Aristotle's own remarks on desire and my own concerns in discussing these, we can turn to Aristotle's discussions of voluntary action in *De Motu Animalium* and *De Anima*. As stated in my introductory remarks, Aristotle in *De Motu* 6 is clear that all cases of (voluntary) action presuppose *orexis* and the operation of at least one of the discerning faculties (that is, perception, *phantasia* or thought) (*MA* 700b17-24). But in Chapter 8 Aristotle appears to make the further claim that forming an action-prompting desire requires having some suitable *phantasia*:

For the affections suitably prepare the organic parts, desire the affections and *phantasia* the desire; and *phantasia* comes about either through thought or through perception.

τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὀργανικὰ μέρη παρασκευάζει ἐπιτηδείως τὰ πάθη, ἢ δ' ὄρεξις τὰ πάθη, τὴν δ' ὄρεξιν ἢ φαντασία· αὕτη δὲ γίνεται ἢ διὰ νοήσεως ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως (*MA* 702a17-19).⁴

A related claim is made in *De Anima* III 10, where Aristotle writes that:

In general, as has been said, in so far as the animal is capable of desire, so far is it capable of self-movement; and it is not capable of desire without *phantasia*. And every *phantasia* is either rational or perceptual. In the latter, then, the other animals share also.

ὅλως μὲν οὖν, ὡς περ εἴρηται, ἢ ὀρεκτικὸν τὸ ζῷον, ταύτη αὐτοῦ κινητικόν· ὀρεκτικὸν δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασίας· φαντασία δὲ πᾶσα ἢ λογιστικὴ ἢ αἰσθητικὴ. ταύτης μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μετέχει (*DA* 433b27-30).

Both passages establish a central and, one might think, a necessary role for *phantasia* in desire that leads to action; unfortunately, Aristotle does not offer any further discussion that makes clear just what the role is that he envisages. The question of the envisaged role for *phantasia* has thus, understandably, attracted a fair amount of attention from scholars, not merely for the sake of understanding Aristotle's account of action and desire, but because of the centrality of these notions within Aristotle's ethics more generally.⁵ I submit, indeed, that by thinking about the role that he may envisage for *phantasia* in these cases – what it is that *phantasia* enables us to do, why in particular this capacity might be required to 'prepare' desire that generates action, and so on – we are offered a fruitful way of thinking about Aristotle's conception of desire as it relates to action. From §6.4 onwards I will examine and then add to a number of recent attempts to account for the role of *phantasia* in desire and action; first, however, it will be necessary to say a little about Aristotle's capacity of *phantasia*: what is *phantasia*, and how does it operate?

⁴ Translations of *De Anima* are based on Shields (2016), and *De Motu* on Nussbaum (1978), with modifications.

⁵ This issue is taken up, amongst others, by Modrak (1987), Whiting (2002), Lorenz (2006), Moss (2012), Johansen (2011).

6.3 PHANTASIA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Offering a comprehensive, and perhaps even coherent, account of Aristotle's capacity of *phantasia* is a familiar difficulty faced by scholars of Aristotle's moral psychology; a difficulty that owes primarily to the fact that Aristotle offers little by way of positive characterisation of the capacity in his psychological works.⁶ In the only chapter of the Aristotelian corpus devoted exclusively to the topic of *phantasia*, Aristotle's analysis proceeds by way of contrast with our capacity for perception on the one hand, and belief on the other; indeed, it is not clear that Aristotle intends even to offer an analysis of *phantasia* here, rather than merely to distinguish it from these other two capacities.⁷ Moreover, Aristotle discusses it in connection with, and holds it in some sense responsible for, a wide range of psychological phenomena. We have already seen that in *De Motu* it is cited as a cause of locomotion, but we discover in further texts such as *De Memoria* and *De Insomniis*, as well as *De Anima* III 3, that *phantasia* is invoked to explain such other phenomena as memory, dreams, after-images, hallucinations and perceptual-illusions.⁸

Some things, however, are clear. *Phantasia* has its root in the verb φαντάζεσθαι, 'to appear', and is importantly connected with the way in which things appear to a being.⁹ It is possessed not

⁶ Most commentators accept that *phantasia* for Aristotle is a distinctive *capacity*, but it remains a further question whether it should also be considered a *faculty* in its own right. In favour are, amongst others, Lorenz (2006), Moss (2012), Schofield (1978); against, Wedin (1988). For discussion of the relation between the *phantastikon* and the *aisthetikon*, see especially Whiting (2002).

⁷ Hence, perhaps, why he speaks of 'delineating' (διορίσαντας) *phantasia*, rather than of offering an account of it. He is marking the boundaries of *phantasia*, perception and thought, rather than offering an account of its essence.

Schofield (1978), and later Osborne (2000), argue that he distinguishes between the three capacities for the sake ultimately of upholding the distinction between perception and thought, denied by some of his predecessors. In the opening lines of *DA* III 3, Aristotle states that one of the characteristics of mind is that it thinks (νοεῖν), judges (κρίνειν) and perceives (αἰσθάνεσθαι), but he immediately acknowledges that some pre-Socratics took thinking and perceiving to be identical (427a22), implying that his original division of the activities of the mind cannot be upheld. As Aristotle goes on to show from 427b6, however, thinking and perceiving cannot be the same thing, since (i) they are not extensionally equivalent and (ii) perception, unlike thought, is always true. If his intention in III 3 is indeed to defend the distinction between perception and thought, this must involve an explanation of how his predecessors could come to be so confused about the two. It is for this reason that he is interested in *phantasia*, for its role in relation both to thought and perception can lead to a confusion of the two faculties. Hence he must show here that *phantasia* and perception, and *phantasia* and thought are not the same and therefore that the distinction between thought and perception can indeed be upheld. For further discussion, see Schofield (1978, pp.271-2).

Most recently, Shields has suggested that Aristotle acknowledges that "he owes his readers some proof of our even having such a capacity or faculty, and he thinks that such a proof intimately involves distinguishing imagination from some other capacities to which some might be inclined to reduce it" (2016, p.275).

⁸ In light of these latter discussions, certain commentators have been tempted to construe *phantasia* as the capacity for non-paradigmatic sensory experiences (Schofield, 1978). See Moss (2012, p.53) for a compelling argument against characterising *phantasia* in this way. In any case, *phantasia*'s role in relation to such experiences – with the exception of memory and anticipation – will not be our focus.

⁹ Most commentators agree that we ought not to understand 'the appearance of things' as *mere* appearances; that is, the kind of appearing which is opposed to how things are in the world. For whilst there are of course cases in which the way that things appear to the subject do not faithfully represent the way that things are (e.g. *DA* 428b4), these

only by humans but almost all non-rational animals too.¹⁰ It is a close relative of perception, and is said not to be possible without perception (428b11). Perhaps the most substantial characterisation of *phantasia* is to be found in Aristotle's discussion of its relation to perception:

Since when something has been set in motion, something else is moved by it, and since *phantasia* seems to be a sort of motion and not to come about without perception, but rather to occur in things which are perceiving and to be of those things of which perception is, and since motion comes about from the actuality of perception, and this is necessarily similar to the perception, this motion will be neither possible without perception, nor could it belong to things which are not perceiving; and it is possible for what has *phantasia* both to act and be affected in many ways and in accordance with it, and for it to be either true or false.

Ἄλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἔστι κινήθεντος τουδὶ κινεῖσθαι ἕτερον ὑπὸ τούτου, ἢ δὲ φαντασία κίνησις τις δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ οὐκ ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως γίνεσθαι ἀλλ' αἰσθανομένοις καὶ ὧν αἴσθησις ἐστίν, ἔστι δὲ γίνεσθαι κίνησιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αἰσθήσεως, καὶ ταύτην ὁμοίαν ἀνάγκη εἶναι τῇ αἰσθήσει, εἴη ἂν αὕτη ἢ κίνησις οὔτε ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως ἐνδεχομένη οὔτε μὴ αἰσθανομένοις ὑπάρχειν, καὶ πολλὰ κατ' αὐτὴν καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν τὸ ἔχον, καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἀληθῆ καὶ ψευδῆ (428b10-17).

Phantasia is a movement, resulting from a perception, occurring in beings who perceive and is like perception. It can be either true or false,¹¹ and is something in virtue of which beings can act, and be affected. This is reiterated in the final lines of *DA* III 3, where Aristotle concludes that:

Because instances of *phantasia* persist and are similar to perceptions, animals do many things in accordance with them, some because they lack reason, e.g. beasts, and others because of the occasional shrouding of reason by passion, or sickness, or sleep, e.g. humans.

καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐμμένειν καὶ ὁμοίως εἶναι ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι, πολλὰ κατ' αὐτὰς πράττει τὰ ζῶα, τὰ μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν νοῦν, οἷον τὰ θηρία, τὰ δὲ διὰ τὸ ἐπικαλύπτεσθαι τὸν νοῦν ἐνίοτε πάθει ἢ νόσοις ἢ ὕπνῳ, οἷον οἱ ἄνθρωποι (429a4-8).

do not exhaust all forms of appearance. Rather, it is supposed that the connection between *phantasia* and the verb *phainesthai* is intended to bring out the sense in which an object must *appear to the subject in a certain way*.

¹⁰ There is a long history of dispute as to which animals Aristotle denies *phantasia*. At *DA* 428a10-11 Aristotle writes that “Perception is always present, but not *phantasia*. But if they were the same in actuality it would be possible for all beasts to have *phantasia*, and it seems that this is not so, e.g. the ant or bee, and the grub (οἷον μύρμηκι ἢ μελίττη ἢ σκώληκι). It has been suggested by Torstrick that the text be amended to “οἷον μύρμηκι μὲν ἢ μελίττη, σκώληκι δ' οὐ”, and that we should thus take Aristotle to be contrasting bees and ants who *do* have *phantasia*, with grubs who do not. The suggestion is supported by evidence from Themistius (*De Anima*, 90, 6) who includes ants and bees in the list of animals who have *phantasia*. Lorenz (2006, p.139), argues that this conjecture fits better with Aristotle's claims about bees elsewhere: in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle attributes memory to bees (980a27-b25), and Aristotle maintains in *De Memoria* that the capacity for memory requires the capacity for *phantasia*. Shields also accepts this reading in his commentary and translation of *De Anima* (2016, p.57; p.283)

¹¹ Whilst perceptions for Aristotle are always true, he argues that *phantasiai* are for the most part false (*DA* 428a11-12); here, we may suppose that he takes ‘true’ to mean ‘represents something’ (and ‘false’ the opposite).

Importantly, this passage not only anticipates Aristotle's discussions in *DA* III 9-10 and *De Motu Animalium*, in which *phantasia* is invoked in the explanation of animal action, but appears to cite the fact that *phantasmata* persist and are similar to perceptions as reason for *phantasia*'s efficacy.¹²

Whilst there has been considerable disagreement about the nature of *phantasia* and how it functions, broadly two dominant views have emerged within scholarship of the last forty years. On one view, which finds support in Nussbaum's (1978) influential discussion, *phantasia* is regarded as an interpretive capacity, in virtue of which we see objects *as* objects of a certain sort.¹³ On this view, when a subject perceives an object in her environment, she properly perceives, for example, its colour and its shape, whilst its presentation as an object of a certain sort is possible only thanks to the activity of *phantasia*. Yet whilst *phantasia* is clearly capable of representing objects as objects of certain sorts,¹⁴ the interpretive account of *phantasia* has been largely rejected on the grounds that it attributes to *phantasia* a role which it seems perception on its own is capable of performing. Whilst Nussbaum has attempted to show that certain remarks of Aristotle's might be taken to indicate that perception is, on his view, a passive faculty,¹⁵ and as such that a further faculty is required to explain the agent's selective fastening-onto certain aspects of her environment, as others have noted, the weight of evidence suggests that Aristotle regards

¹² We will return to this thought in §6.5.1 below.

¹³ Nussbaum writes:

The use of *phantasia* in action-contexts, and its broad connection with *phainetai* throughout Aristotle suggested to us that *phantasia* is the faculty in virtue of which the animal sees his object as an object of a certain sort, so that we can say that the perception has for him some potentially motivating content. ...*Phantasia*, then, is the animal's awareness of some object or state of affairs, which may well prove to be an object of desire. It can serve both to present the object of desire initially, and, later, to specify the object at hand as what is desired (Nussbaum, 1978, pp.255-61).

Osborne too identifies one of four roles she takes to be played by *phantasia* as the ability "to construe some currently available perceptual field in the light of familiar forms previously encountered, so that it presents itself to the attention as a set of discrete objects of interest (thus allowing for what we call 'seeing as')" (2000, p.262). An interpretive account is considered in Ross, though Ross denies that this is Aristotle's deliberate view and observes that "usually *phantasia* is described as operating only after the sensible object is gone" (1949, p.143).

¹⁴ See the example of the Sun appearing a foot across at *DA* 428b. Our seeing the Sun as a foot across in this example must be the product of *phantasia* (or else the example does nothing to distinguish *phantasia* and *doxa*), and the example shows that *phantasia* is capable of presenting measures of size ('a foot across'), as well as presumably shape and colour – and indeed, of identifying an object as a certain kind ('the Sun'). See Osborne (2000) for discussion of this passage in connection with the notion of 'seeing as'.

¹⁵ The passivity of perception is indicated, Nussbaum suggests, by passages such as *DA* 428a11-12, where Aristotle claims that *aisthēsis* is always accurate whilst *phantasia* can be false, emphasising in her view the mechanical, reproductive side of *aisthēsis* in Aristotle's theory. One might appeal for further evidence of passivity to Aristotle's wax analogy, which is used to illustrate the manner in which the sense organ is affected by the perceptible form of the object without the matter (*DA* 424a17), that is, just as a piece of wax receives the imprint of a seal without its matter.

perception as on the whole active and discerning (see esp. *DA* 425a22; *MA* 700b21) and capable of presenting objects as objects of certain sorts.¹⁶

In place of the interpretive account, the now dominant view emphasises instead the causal connection between perception and *phantasia* (Caston 1996, 1998; Everson, 1997; Lorenz, 2006; Johansen, 2012, Moss, 2012). As *DA* III 3 reveals, Aristotle characterises *phantasia* as a change produced by the actuality or function of perception, a claim reiterated at *Insomn.* 459a17-19. In *Insomn.* II and III, Aristotle adds further detail, explaining that in perception, it is the sensible objects (*aisthēta*) corresponding to each sense that produce perceptions in us (459a24-25). Specifically, these objects cause a stimulation or movement – an *aisthēma* – in the relevant sense organ (460b28-30), and when this movement travels to, and acts upon, the central sense organ, a sensory experience is produced.¹⁷ Yet as we also saw at 428b10, Aristotle holds that a change or movement can also produce further changes; thus the initial stimulation of the sense organ can give rise to a further change; this further change being *phantasia*.

Given this close relation between *phantasia* and perception, it is generally supposed that *phantasia* will thereby share the same content as perception, and is thus likewise rich in content.¹⁸ This would appear to be supported by Aristotle's remark at *DA* 428b27 which makes clear that *phantasia* arises from each kind of perception (proper, common and coincidental), and not just the proper objects of perception. Since *phantasiai* are similar to perceptions, but can persist (ἐμμένειν, 428a4) beyond the initial sensory experience and in the absence of the perceptual object, it is therefore supposed that a central function of *phantasia* is to present to a subject perceptual content either when they are not perceiving, or in the absence of the relevant sensory object. It is a capacity for having experiences very like perceptions of actual objects, but experiences which, in not being directly caused by perceptual objects, can thus occur in the absence of such objects.¹⁹

We can add to this a few details that have importantly been emphasised by scholars. First, as we have seen, Aristotle allows that *phantasiai* can be false, in the sense that they can misrepresent

¹⁶ As we have already seen in the previous chapter (§5.4), Aristotle's discussion of the coincidental objects of perception strongly indicates that perception is capable of presenting perceived objects as objects of certain sort (*DA* 418a21-24).

¹⁷ For further discussion of the experience of perception and the role of the central organ, see Caston (1998, p.274ff) and Everson (1997, p.141-148).

¹⁸ Whiting (2002, p.194) suggests that since perception in rational animals is richer than in non-rational animals, rational animals have more sophisticated and powerful forms of *phantasia*.

¹⁹ *Phantasia*'s liberation from what is present, and its potential to be directed towards what is future, will be of importance with regards to understanding its role in desire and the production of action, as we will see.

phenomena, and Aristotle in *De Insomniis* offers an account of how *phantasiai* can become distorted in the face of disturbance. But this passage has also been appealed to, notably by Lorenz (2006, pp.152-157), as evidence for the thought that, in the *absence* of disturbance, Aristotle must take it that *phantasia* not only preserves perceptual content, but can preserve it in an appropriately ordered way. Given this, Lorenz argues, it is reasonable to suppose that *phantasia* is capable of representing complex phenomena such as events and processes, and indeed ‘situations’.

It is worth noting too that *phantasia* appears capable of presenting objects in different temporal modes, for we can represent things through *phantasia* as being past, and also as future. Aristotle’s discussion of emotion in the *Rhetoric* strongly indicates that *phantasia* is responsible for the cognitive content of emotions,²⁰ and we discover there, for example, that fear is a future directed emotion, in which the imminent (μέλλοντος) evil (*Rhet.* 1182a20-1) that is feared must be seen as future and close at hand (*Rhet.* 1182a25). Conversely, memory – which likewise relies on *phantasia* – is of the past (*Mem.* 499b15); when a person exercises their memory they always say “in their mind that they have heard, or felt, or thought this before” (*Mem.* 449b23-24). And since memory belongs to the perceptual part of the soul, and exists in creatures not possessed of a rational soul, the recognition of a thing *as past* cannot be a function of thought. Interestingly, these passages not only offer evidence of *phantasia*’s being such as to present things in different temporal modes, but suggest that an object’s temporal mode of presentation will in part determine whether a given *phantasia* will have a given effect.

A final feature of *phantasia* that is worth emphasising, before we turn to consider its role in the formation of desire and action, is that it can be evaluative. As a matter of fact, there are two ways in which we might call it evaluative. On the one hand, *phantasia* appears to be capable of representing evaluative properties; it can represent objects as pleasant or painful, or good or bad. Aristotle refers throughout the ethical and psychological works both to the ‘apparent good’ (φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν) and the ‘apparently pleasant’ (φαινόμενα ἡδέα) (see e.g. *Rhet.* 1369b20, 23) which are taken (e.g. by Moss, 2012, p.7) as evidence that the properties of goodness and pleasure, and their opposites, can be represented through *phantasia*.²¹

²⁰ For an alternative view, according to which the cognitive content of emotions afforded by *doxa*, see esp. Dow (2009). For an overview of the *doxastic* vs. *phantastic* debate, and a convincing defence of the view that the cognitive content of emotions is provided by *phantasia*, see Moss (2012, ch.4). This indeed is now accepted by Dow (2013).

²¹ It might of course be argued that such references to the ‘apparently pleasant’, like the ‘apparent good’, are intended to mark a contrast between what is truly pleasant and what merely seems pleasant to a subject, but the context of Aristotle’s discussions, notably in the *Rhetoric* suggest that he regards the apparently pleasant as something

On the other hand, certain of Aristotle's remarks indicate that *phantasia* itself can be pleasant. We see evidence of this in Aristotle's discussion of memory and anticipation in the *Rhetoric*, both of which require the engagement of our capacity of *phantasia* for:

if to be pleased consists in the perceiving of a certain *pathos*, and *phantasia* is a certain weak perception, then a *phantasia* of what is remembered or what is hoped will attend both the man who remembers and the man who hopes. If this is so, it is clear that there is pleasure both for those who remember and for those who hope, since there is perception. Therefore, of necessity all pleasant things must either be present in perception, or past in recollection, or future in hope.

Ἐπεὶ δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἡδεσθαι ἐν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι τινος πάθους, ἢ δὲ φαντασία ἐστὶν αἰσθησίς τις ἀσθενής, κἂν τῷ μεμνημένῳ καὶ τῷ ἐλπίζοντι ἀκολουθοῖ ἂν φαντασία τις οὐ μέμνηται ἢ ἐλπίζει. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, δηλὸν ὅτι καὶ ἡδοναὶ ἅμα μεμνημένοις καὶ ἐλπίζουσιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ αἰσθησίς. ὥστ' ἀνάγκη πάντα τὰ ἡδέα ἢ ἐν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι εἶναι παρόντα ἢ ἐν τῷ μεμνησθαι γεγενημένα ἢ ἐν τῷ ἐλπίζειν μέλλοντα (*Rhet.* 1370a27-35).²²

Memory and expectation, being not of the present, but the past and future respectively, operate on the basis of *phantasia*; *phantasia*, itself being based on perception, allows us to experience the pleasure or pain that accompanied the original perception, albeit perhaps in a weaker form. If to drink some wine is pleasant, then it may well be the case that to remember or anticipate drinking some will be pleasant was well.²³ That *phantasia* can, and often does, represent evaluative qualities will prove to be important in what follows.

represented through *phantasia*. Fear, for example, is defined as a painful feeling produced by a *phantasia* of an imminent evil causing great destruction or pain (ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ, *Rhet.* 1382a21).

²² See also *Physics* (247a7-14). Moss suggest that this and the *Rhetoric* passage should be read in conjunction with the Aristotle's discussion in *De Motu* of the heatings and chillings which accompany pleasurable and painful *pathē*:

for confidence, fears, sexual excitement, and other bodily affections, painful and pleasant, are accompanied by heating and chilling, in some cases of a part, in others of the whole body. Memory and anticipation, using things of this kind as likenesses, are now to a lesser degree, now to a greater, responsible for the same things (θάρρη γὰρ καὶ φόβου καὶ ἀφοροδισασμοὶ καὶ τἄλλα τὰ σωματικὰ λυπηρὰ καὶ ἡδέα τὰ μὲν κατὰ μέρος μετὰ θερμότητος ἢ ψύξεώς ἐστι, τὰ δὲ καθ' ὅλον τὸ σῶμα· μνημαὶ δὲ καὶ ἐλπίδες, οἷον εἰδῶλοις χρώμεναι τοῖς τοιοῦτοις, ὅτε μὲν ἦττον ὅτε δὲ μᾶλλον αἰτίαι τῶν αὐτῶν εἰσὶν (702a2-7).

When *phantasia* reproduces a pleasurable or painful, heating and chilling experience in memory or expectation, Moss takes it that the result is itself pleasurable or painful, heating and chilling. This is the material counterpart of the *Physics* and *Rhetoric* claims that memory and expectation are themselves pleasant or painful.

²³ It is worth noting, though, that while it is possible for *phantasia* involved in memory and anticipation to produce the same kinds of effects as were or would be produced if the subject were undergoing an actual perception of an object, there is evidence from other passages that there is at least not a necessary connection between the experience of a past pleasure or pain, and the recollection of that experience (or indeed, the anticipation of a like experience). First, as we saw in *DA* III 3 in the course of distinguishing *phantasia* and belief, Aristotle writes that:

when we come to believe something terrible or frightening we are correspondingly affected right away...but in the case of *phantasia*, we are just as if we had seen the terrible or audacious things in a picture. (ἔτι δὲ ὅταν μὲν δοξάσωμεν δεινόν τι ἢ φοβερόν, εὐθὺς συμπάσχομεν, [...] κατὰ δὲ τὴν φαντασίαν ὡσαύτως ἔχομεν ὥσπερ ἂν οἱ θεώμενοι ἐν γραφῇ τὰ δεινὰ ἢ θαρραλέα) (427b17-24).

The passage is mistakenly taken by intellectualist interpreters of Aristotle's account of emotion to indicate that only beliefs and not *phantasiai* can affect a subject in the way required of emotions, but it does show that *phantasiai* do not in all cases produce the same affective response that a perception of such an object would.

6.4 TWO PICTURES OF *PHANTASIA* IN THE ‘PREPARATION’ OF DESIRE

Whilst Aristotle offers little information about the role that he envisages for *phantasia* in the ‘preparation’ of desire and action, most commentators have tended to suppose that its role will have to do with the presentation to the subject of suitable goals. But just what is involved in this is a matter of some disagreement. Nevertheless, two broad (and not necessarily incompatible) roles for *phantasia* in the preparation of desire and action have been emphasised in recent literature, and we will examine these now.

6.4.1 *PHANTASIA* AND THE PRESENTATION OF PLEASURE

It is generally agreed that for something to be an object of desire requires that the subject sees it as somehow attractive. Indeed, in both the ethical and psychological works Aristotle explicitly identifies the good or the apparent good as *the* objects of desire, at least in their most general specifications (*DA* 433a27-29; *NE* 1113a23-24). The apparent good, he claims, ranks as a good (τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθὸν ἀγαθοῦ χώραν ἔχειν), and so does the pleasant, this being an apparent good (καὶ τὸ ἡδύ· φαινόμενον γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀγαθόν) (*MA* 700b28-9).

Elsewhere Aristotle explicitly states that the object of *epithumia* (appetitive desire) is pleasure (*DA* 413b23-24; 414b1-6) and later in *De Motu* Aristotle again ties pleasure closely to that which initiates movement, identifying the objects of pursuit and avoidance in the sphere of action as the pleasant and the painful (Ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν, ὡσπερ εἴρηται, τῆς κινήσεως τὸ ἐν τῷ πρακτῷ διωκτὸν καὶ φευκτὸν [...] τὸ μὲν γὰρ λυπηρὸν φευκτὸν, τὸ δ’ ἡδὺ διωκτὸν, 701b33-36).²⁴ Given the close connection between pleasure and desire, many commentators have thus supposed that the role of *phantasia* in the preparation of desire and the production of action is either to present to the subject some pleasure, or to associate, as it were, objects with pleasure in some way.

Within the current debate, one of the first commentators to argue that *phantasia* is necessary to associate objects with pleasure is Modrak. Modrak argues that whilst the apprehension by a subject of a desired object might occur through perception, *phantasia* or thought, “*phantasia* seems to focus desire on a particular object in a way in which neither perception nor thought does.

²⁴ Whiting notes an important difference between plants, which do not of course possess desire, and animals, which is that animals, unlike plants need to move in order to take nourishment (animals are not automatically nourished by things to which they are more or less permanently attached):

So they need something to motivate them. This is the role played by pleasure and pain, which are essentially motivational states, states that simple animals are moved either to sustain or to end and that complex animals – capable of representing them in imagination – are also moved either to bring about or to avoid” (Whiting 2002, 173).

Phantasia provides the ‘something else’ that explains the agent’s choice” (1987, p.96). Taking the example of a piece of fruit appearing pleasant to a hungry bird, Modrak supposes that:

if we are to explain the association of gustatory pleasures with an object presented through other sense modalities, we must appeal to information not immediately present to the senses; the most likely source of this information would be past experience. In bringing past experience to bear on present perceptions, *phantasia* would play the role of memory in the modern sense, namely the utilisation of previously acquired information (1987, p.97).

On this view, the mere perception of an object is not sufficient to render it an object of desire; the object needs to be associated with certain relevant sorts of pleasure, by virtue of which it appears as something choiceworthy, and this task is performed by *phantasia*.

Yet whilst many have welcomed Modrak’s insight that *phantasia* plays an important role in the presentation of what is pleasant and painful in a way which thus suitably prepares desire, scholars have nevertheless been critical of the particular account she offers,²⁵ and this criticism is worth noting. The criticism, in short, is that Modrak appears to attribute to *phantasia* a role that it is reasonable to suppose could be filled by perception, and for this reason does nothing to show why *phantasia* should be required to perform the task she describes.²⁶ For Aristotle’s discussion of perception strongly indicates that perception on its own can present an object as pleasant or painful. At 413b23-24 Aristotle tells us that “where there is perception, there is pain and pleasure, and where these, there is of necessity appetite” (ὅπου μὲν γὰρ αἴσθησις, καὶ λύπη τε καὶ ἡδονή, ὅπου δὲ ταῦτα, ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἐπιθυμία), and shortly after that “and that to which perception belongs, to this belongs also pleasure and pain, as well as both the pleasurable and the painful” (ὃ δ’ αἴσθησις ὑπάρχει, τούτῳ ἡδονή τε καὶ λύπη καὶ τὸ ἡδύ τε καὶ λυπηρόν, 414b4-5).²⁷ Why, then,

²⁵ See for example Moss (2012, p.55), Johansen (2012, p.212).

²⁶ As an aside, it is unclear whether this criticism of Modrak is entirely fair, since it is not clear that she is maintaining that *phantasia* is required to present the pleasant or the painful in *all* cases, or only in those where the *relevant* pleasures and pains *are not present to perception*. There are certainly parts of Modrak’s account which, if taken in isolation, might imply that she takes the association of objects with pleasure to be achievable only by *phantasia*, for example in the claim that “*Phantasia* provides the ‘something else’ that explains the agent’s choice” (p.96), or in her analysis of *MA* 702a16-19, which she claims that Aristotle:

describes a two-part cognitive process. *Aisthêsis* or *noêsis* presents an object, and *phantasia* elaborates on that object, reinterpreting it in the light of anticipated pleasures and pains. This description secures a place for *phantasia* even in cases where a different cognitive faculty presents the object (1987, p.97).

The ‘securing’ of a role for *phantasia* would imply that she takes only *phantasia* to play this role. And yet, her example of a bird’s selection of a piece of fruit, and her demand that an explanation be offered of how *gustatory* pleasures come to be associated with an object presented through other sense modalities, might equally indicate that she takes *phantasia* to be necessary not for the presentation of pleasure to a subject *per se*, but the presentation of pleasure in cases where the pleasure is not present to the relevant sensory modality. If the latter is the case, then her account is not so different from the qualified accounts offered by subsequent commentators.

²⁷ Of course, it might be argued that the connection Aristotle draws in these passages between perception and pleasure and pain is dependent on the presence of *phantasia* (a suggestion with *prima facie* support in the fact that

should *phantasia* be thought to ‘focus desire on a particular object’ in a way perception does not, if perception too can present an object as pleasant or painful?

I draw our attention to this particular criticism not so much to detail the success or failings of a particular commentator’s account, but to bring into view a popular strategy that has been adopted among recent commentators for maintaining Modrak’s insight that *phantasia* may play a role in the presentation of objects as pleasant, whilst granting that the presentation of pleasure can be achieved through perception alone. The strategy, in short, has been to suggest that Aristotle assigns this particular role to *phantasia* in a more limited range of cases. When Aristotle seems to imply that *phantasia* is necessary for the formation of desires that lead to action, it is suggested that he has in mind cases where an animal must move to secure its goal; cases, that is, where the object of desire is not present to perception, or at least the relevant sensory modality.²⁸ When a subject is in direct perceptual contact with an object – when they are tasting the fruit, say – they experience pleasure, and so are motivated to continue eating (or alternatively, if they are in direct perceptual contact with an unpleasant object, they experience pain and so aversion, as a result of which they cease to eat). But when the fruit is at a distance, or not in the subject’s perceptual field at all, there is no strict perception of pleasure to motivate the subject to pursue the fruit. Since, however, *phantasia* can operate in the absence of perceptible objects and independently of what is presently given to perception, it is able to represent the relevant object (whether perceived or imagined) as pleasant; in this way the subject is motivated to pursue that object.²⁹

Modrak, as we have seen, speaks of the association of certain objects with pleasure, and the ‘reinterpretation’ of such objects in light of pleasures (n.26 above); Whiting, and others, typically

the claim is 413b23 is preceded by the claim that if a subject has perception, they then have *phantasia* and desire (413b22-23)). Yet since Aristotle maintains that there are animals with perception, but without *phantasia*, he is not licensed to say that it follows from there being perception that there is pleasure and pain, if the pleasure and pain in fact depend on the presence of *phantasia*. Thus we do better to take him at his word when he writes that from perception there is pleasure and pain.

For a persuasive exposition of the perception of evaluative properties see Chapter 2 of Moss (2012, pp.22-47).

²⁸ For in both *De Anima* III 10 and *De Motu Animalium* 8, it is suggested that Aristotle is not engaged in the project of analysing desire *per se*, nor of accounting for action in general, but specifically of accounting for the production of locomotion (*DA* 432a15-18), (nor any locomotion, but specifically locomotion for the sake of something (τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα, 700b15)). By contrast when Aristotle speaks of the connection between desire and perception – implying that certain forms of pursuit and avoidance arise simply from perceptions of something as pleasant or painful (431a8-16) – no mention is made of locomotion.

Those who take seriously the apparent restriction of Aristotle’s account include Lorenz (2006), Johansen (2012) and Moss (2012). Cf. Pearson (2012).

²⁹ Moreover, Moss argues, because there is no thinking without *phantasmata* (see 431a14-17), *phantasia* must be involved even when the goal is apprehended by thought.

speak of the ‘representation’ of objects as pleasant (2002, p.173).³⁰ But it is worth noting a slightly different way in which *phantasia* has been thought to motivate by virtue of its potentially evaluative nature, and that is by being *itself* pleasurable or painful, just like perception. This is the view that has recently been proposed by Moss, who writes that:

If actually tasting the water was pleasurable, then so too will be the memory of tasting it, or the anticipation of tasting some more. Here Aristotle is following Plato’s characterisation of expectations (or ‘hopes’ - ἐλπίδες) in the *Philebus*: they are pleasures of the soul in which we ‘pre-enjoy’ (προχαίρειν) some future pleasure (*Phil.* 39d4ff.) [...] Crucially the idea is not – or not just – that we expect that something will be pleasant, or remember that it was pleasant. Rather, the expecting or remembering is itself pleasurable (Moss, 2012, pp.58-9).

On Moss’ account, since *phantasiai* are similar to the perceptions from which they arise, she takes it that they will not only preserve the content of such perceptions, but their affective component too; that is, they will preserve the heatings and chillings which accompany perceptions of pleasure and pain (*MA* 702a1). And it is in this way, she argues, that *phantasia* is motivating. For when an animal experiences a *phantasma* of an object which it has perceived as pleasant, that *phantasma* will itself be pleasant, and so produce the heating that causes the limbs to contract and the animal to move towards the object (2012, p.60).

Whilst it might appear to be a strength of this interpretation that it connects Aristotle’s psychological account of motivation with his physiological account of movement, there are certain explanatory challenges facing this account which do not arise, or are less problematic, for the ‘representational’ view, and which in the absence of further explanation, may thus give one reason to prefer the ‘representational’ account over the ‘affective’. For Aristotle’s example at *DA* 427b21-24 of the imagined frightening scene that does not move us, unlike the real thing, would seem to present a case in which the affective component is not preserved and re-presented, though Moss’ remarks implied that the affective component of evaluative perceptions was always preserved and re-presented. Why then do such imagined situations appear not to be accompanied by a feeling of pain, and so motivating? In her later discussion of the passions, Moss suggests that there are two ways of reconciling this passage with the putative evidence that evaluative appearances are essentially passion inducing:

Possibly, Aristotle’s point is that we do feel *some* fear, as he arguably thinks we do when we look at a frightening picture (or when we remember something terrible). Alternatively, the idea might be that when we actively, deliberately entertain appearances (when the exercise of

³⁰ See also Lorenz (2006) and Johansen (2012).

phantasia is 'up to us'), we are not subject to them in the same way as we are when they simply strike us (2012, p.94).

In the context of our own discussion, then, Moss could either argue that contrary to what the passage might be thought to indicate, the affective and supposedly motivating component of an evaluative perception *is* always preserved and re-presented to a subject, but in such cases it is much weaker and thus not motivating. Or else, she might argue that this component is not re-presented to subjects when the *phantasma* is deliberately conjured; the question then, of course, would be why this is so. We might reasonably expect an explanation of how it is that the affective component comes apart from the other representational components of the subject's *phantasia*, and why it is that when a *phantasma* is deliberately conjured the affective component is not re-presented to the subject.

One might, of course, wonder whether such cases present a problem for the representational account too. For one might ask: if the frightening scene is represented as painful, why then is it not motivating? Yet this would only be problematic if the representation of pain was taken to be sufficient to motivate (as Moss appears to suppose that pleasurable or painful affects are), and this then helpfully brings us to a criticism (raised by Moss herself) that can be levelled at any account which identifies the motivating role of *phantasia* entirely with its ability to present non-present pleasures to a subject. For as Moss writes:

It is difficult to see how merely representing an object or action to oneself – even representing it in a pleasurable, desire-inducing way – can suffice to render it a goal. What makes the pleasurable *phantasiai* which count as representations of goals any different from pleasurable memories, or hallucinations? It seems that Aristotle needs the idea of different modes of presentation: presenting something as future and attainable, rather than as past, for example, or as a mere fantasy. This looks like a real gap in the account I have attributed to Aristotle (2012, pp.62-63).

As Moss' remarks indicate, through *phantasia* we can have evaluative memories and hallucinations of various kinds of objects, but these of course are not motivating. And this appears to be a problem for anyone who takes the only role for *phantasia* in the preparation of desire and action to consist in the presentation of pleasure, for such accounts cannot explain why in some cases the presentation of pleasure is motivating and in others it is not. It seems, as Moss notes, that what is required is an idea of something like different modes of presentation, where motivating *phantasiai* would be presented under the mode of future and attainable, perhaps, whilst memories, for example, would be presented under the mode of past, and as such as impracticable (*NE* 1139b6ff).

Interestingly, Moss writes that:

this too may well be a gap that could in principle be filled by a suitably expanded or fleshed-out conception of *phantasia*. But once again, the evidence seems to suggest that Aristotle neither noticed this gap nor intended to fill it with *phantasia* (2012, p.63).

Because, on her view, the role of *phantasia* in desire and action is simply to present non-present pleasures to a subject, she takes it that Aristotle himself is faced with this explanatory gap. And yet it is not clear that this explanatory gap is as much a problem for Aristotle as it is a problem for Moss' interpretation of him.

Aristotle's various discussions of the *prakton telos* (*MA* 6; *DA* III 10), and its connection with the possible and attainable and so on (*DA* 433a30;³¹ cf. *NE* 1111b22–24; 1139b5–13), do suggest that Aristotle recognised that there must be more to a subject's apprehension of an object of desire than its being pleasant for this to motivate her to act. And as we have already seen in the foregoing discussion – and will see further in the discussion to come – Aristotle's account of *phantasia* is sufficiently rich to account for these different modes of presentation. His conception of *phantasia* is thus sufficiently rich that the role he envisaged for it in motivating action could lie in its ability to represent evaluative content, not currently given to perception, under a particular mode of presentation. I believe, indeed, that this is something that other commentators have recognised too, in particular those who have attributed to *phantasia* a role in the presentation of 'prospects', which we will discuss shortly

Before we turn to these views, however, it is important to recognise that Moss is led to suppose that Aristotle is saddled with an explanatory gap, and would need a 'fleshed out' conception of *phantasia* to bridge it, because she herself works with a rather limited conception of *phantasia*. Moss seeks to explain the role that *phantasia* plays in desire entirely in terms of what she calls a 'Basic Conception' of *phantasia*, which she argues is exhausted by the following three claims:

- (1) *Phantasia* always arises from perception – that is, every episode of *phantasia* is based in some way on an episode of perception; ...
- (2) *Phantasia* is independent of perceptible objects in a way that perception is not, for one can have a *phantasia* of something not present to perception; ...
- (3) *Phantasmata* are similar to the *aisthēmata* from which they arise, and

³¹ In *DA* III 10 Aristotle offers some clarification as to what he means by 'τὸ πρακτὸν', explaining that "the practical is that which is possible and can be otherwise" (πρακτὸν δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον καὶ ἄλλως ἔχειν, *DA* 433a30), which we might take to suggest that the objects of action prompting desires are things within the realm of possibility, unlike the objects of idle wishes, which we saw can be things that are impossible. The presentation of the *prakton telos* as an object of thought in *De Motu* 6 indicates moreover that the *telos* need not simply be something within the realm of the possible, but that it be *apprehended* by the subject as such.

therefore have similar psychological effects – and thus a *phantasia* of an object is very like the actual perception of that object (2012, p.52-53).

Claims (1) - (3), Moss argues, “exhaust the features that Aristotle consistently and explicitly attributes to *phantasia*” (2012, p.53), and she accuses other commentators of ‘going beyond the text’, when they attribute to *phantasia* functions which go beyond those captured by these claims. By ‘consistently’ I take it that Moss here means ‘repeatedly’ (or even ‘always’), rather than ‘being consistent with other claims’. And yet the fact that a feature is not in this sense ‘consistently’ or entirely explicitly attributed to *phantasia* is not a reason to suppose it does not form part of Aristotle’s conception. As we noted earlier, many of Aristotle’s discussions of *phantasia* are driven by other concerns, and it should not be surprising then that certain functions of *phantasia* are referred to in some places and not in others, or that given the purpose of a given discussion, certain functions are simply alluded to rather than made explicit. It seems, then, that Moss’ account of *phantasia* is overly restrictive, and in turn leads her to suppose that the only role Aristotle could have envisaged for *phantasia* in desire and action is in the presentation of previous perceptions of pleasures to a subject.

6.4.2 PHANTASIA AND ENVISAGING PROSPECTIVE SITUATIONS

Recognising, perhaps, that action motivating desires must be of things that are future and attainable a number of commentators have suggested that *phantasia*’s role in the preparation of desire and action might lie in its ability to present to a subject particular *prospects* (see esp. Lorenz (2006), Johansen (2012), and Pearson (2012)).

Johansen, for example, argues that “what triggers desire [is] *a projection or anticipation of pleasure and pain*” (2012, p.212), and continues later to remark that “*phantasia* is here the representation of perceptual information in the mode of the possible, in the mode of what is doable” (2012, p.216). Lorenz, whose account we will discuss shortly, characterises this activity as the ‘envisaging’ of prospects, and we might suppose that what is important about *envisaging* or *anticipating*, rather than saying *remembering*, or merely *imagining*, something is that to envisage or anticipate is precisely to present that thing as future and possible.

Aristotle’s discussions of memory and hope (*Mem.* 449b27) reveal these to be ways of respectively representing things in the mode of the past and of the future,³² and again as we saw

³² Johansen writes on this point:

in §6.3, Aristotle's discussions of various emotions in the *Rhetoric* reveal that the various contents presented – of dangerous things, perhaps – are also presented in the mode of future, or of the past, depending on the emotion. Indeed, in the case of anger, Aristotle makes clear that the revenge that the subject desires be apprehended as possible (1378b1-4), showing again that *phantasia* can present things in the mode of the possible. Importantly for the account that I develop in §6.5 below, what is anticipated here is a possible action (τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ τιμωρήσασθαι, 1378b2).

Thus we might suppose that to be motivated we cannot simply represent some object as pleasant (or in a pleasurable way, as Moss puts it), but we need rather to envisage the relevant pleasure or pleasurable object, and in doing so to present it to ourselves as future and possible.

There is an important question, however, as to what the content of such envisaging is. Johansen, as we saw above, writes of a projection into the future of pleasure or pain, and indeed I take it that all commentators who endorse a role for *phantasia* in the envisaging of prospects take it that the subject will either represent some future prospect as in some sense pleasant (or painful), or that her anticipation of some future prospect will be accompanied by a feeling of pleasure (or pain). In either case, however, there must be *something* that the subject envisages, and we find an account of this in Lorenz (2006).

On Lorenz' view, *phantasia* plays a role in presenting to a subject the *prospective situations* which in acting they bring about:

Given that it is animal locomotion that [Aristotle] is meaning to explain, he must have in mind the formation of purposes that motivate animals to engage in locomotion, as when a lion forms the purpose of eating a stag that it sees somewhere in its environment. Forming such purposes always, or at least typically, involves accomplishing the cognitive task of envisaging a prospective situation, one that does not currently obtain and that may, as a matter of fact, never come to obtain. I shall refer to this task as envisaging prospects (2006, pp.130-131).

Since perception is of the present and of present things (*Mem.* 449b13-15), it is unable to represent these prospective situations towards which an animal's action is directed, for these do not yet obtain. But *phantasia*, as we know, is not tied to the present or to present objects in the way that

phantasia here appears as a mode of sensory projection: it is an anticipated sensory experience which serves to trigger desire. Elsewhere (*Mem.* 449b27) Aristotle refers to the role of *phantasia* in hope (*elpis*), the anticipation of a future good based on a *phantasma*. Aristotle sees hope as a sort of future-related analogue to memory: where memory involves the use of a *phantasma* as a representation of the past, hope projects a *phantasma* as a representation of the future. Both contrast with perception which is only of the present and requires the presence of a *per se* perceptible object. Hope may involve a specific attitude not generally implied by desires for the future, but it shares this much with desire, the occurrence of a *phantasma* as a representation of a future state (2012, p.213).

perception is, and given this, it is possible for *phantasia* to present the prospect of, for example, eating the stag, that is not currently given to perception.³³

Moss accuses Lorenz of going ‘beyond the text’ in his above suggestion, and argues that he is faced with the burden of showing: “first that Aristotle has in mind a crucial role for *phantasia* which he nowhere mentions, and second that *phantasia* even in lower animals is capable of representing something as complex as ‘situations’” (2012, p.56). But the speculative nature of the account is acknowledged by Lorenz (2006, p.128), and since Aristotle does not make explicit the role he envisages for *phantasia* in desire and action, we have already seen that a certain degree of speculation is precisely what is required. Moreover, as we will see, Lorenz does produce evidence to support both these conjectures, some of which we have already noted earlier in this chapter.³⁴

The ability to envisage prospects may strike us as cognitively sophisticated, and as such only attributable to humans, but Lorenz argues that evidence that even non-human animals are capable of envisaging prospective situations can be found in Aristotle’s discussion of the virtue of moderation at *NE* III 10. Here, Aristotle is concerned to show that the proper objects of temperance are taste and touch, being the proper objects of pleasure for beasts, but to show the latter, he has to explain away the apparent pleasure beasts take in sights, sounds and smells. By way of explanation he writes:

For hounds enjoy not the smell of hares, but devouring them; but the hare’s smell made the hound perceive it. And a lion enjoys not the sound of the ox, but eating it; ...Similarly, what pleases him is not seeing or finding ‘a deer or a wild goat’, but that he will have a meal.

οὐδὲ γὰρ ταῖς ὀσμαῖς τῶν λαγωῶν αἱ κύνες χαίρουσιν ἀλλὰ τῇ βρώσει, τὴν δ’ αἰσθησιν ἢ ὀσμῇ ἐποίησεν: οὐδ’ ὁ λέων τῇ φωνῇ τοῦ βοῦς ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐδωδῇ: [...] ὁμοίως δ’ οὐδ’ ἰδὼν ἢ εὐρῶν ἔλαφον ἢ ἄγριον αἶγα, ἀλλ’ ὅτι βορὰν ἔξει (1118a18-23).

Sights, sounds and smells are at best only incidental objects of pleasure to non-human animals, for whilst a lion may appear to take pleasure in the sight of a stag, it is in fact the prospect of a meal that he delights in. What this passage indicates for our purposes, however, is that the lion is able to envisage such prospects as eating a meal, and that these motivate him to act.

³³ If, by contrast, a lion was currently engaged in eating the stag, and experiencing the pleasure of this activity, there would be no need to envisage the prospect of eating, since it already obtains: the lion will simply continue to eat. Cf. Pearson (2012, p.41ff) who argues that even in such cases, the envisaging of prospects is required.

³⁴ Indeed, it is not clear that the claim that locomotive desires must involve the envisaging of prospects through *phantasia* is any more speculative than Moss’ claim that *phantasia* preserves the *affective* component of perception and motivates animals by producing an actual pleasurable experience. Nor, as I will argue in §6.5.1 below, is it clear that Moss’ own account does not assume that a desiring subject must envisage prospects in some sense.

This account requires, of course, that *phantasia* be able to represent things like situations; but we have already seen in §6.3 that this it can do. Lorenz adds to this the thought that *phantasia* is capable of representing *appropriate* situations too, and does so by appeal to Aristotle's discussion of the relation between sensory affections in *De Memoria*. In *Mem.* II, Aristotle sets out the conditions under which recollection (as opposed to mere remembering) is possible, writing that:

Acts of recollection happen because one change is of a nature to occur after another. If the changes follow each other of necessity, clearly a person who undergoes the earlier change will always undergo the later one. But if they follow each other not of necessity but of habit then for the most part a person will undergo the later one. [...] Whenever we recollect, then, we undergo one of the earlier changes, until we undergo the one after which the change in question habitually occurs. And this is exactly why we hunt for the successor, starting in our thoughts from the present or some something else, and *from something similar, or opposite, or neighbouring*. By this means recollection occurs. For the changes connected with these things in some cases are the same, in others are together, and in others include a part, so that the remainder which one underwent after that part is small.

Συμβαίνουσι δ' αἱ ἀναμνήσεις ἐπειδὴ πέφυκεν ἡ κίνησις ἥδε γενέσθαι μετὰ τήνδε· εἰ μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, δῆλον ὡς ὅταν ἐκείνη κινήθῃ, τήνδε κινήσεται· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀλλ' ἔθει, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ κινήσεται. [...] ὅταν οὖν ἀναμνησκώμεθα, κινούμεθα τῶν προτέρων τινὰ κινήσεων, ἕως ἂν κινήθωμεν μεθ' ἣν ἐκείνη εἴωθεν. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἐφεξῆς θηρεύομεν νοήσαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἢ ἄλλου τινός, καὶ ἀφ' ὁμοίου ἢ ἐναντίου ἢ τοῦ σύνεγγυς. διὰ τοῦτο γίνεται ἡ ἀνάμνησις· αἱ γὰρ κινήσεις τούτων τῶν μὲν αἱ αὐταί, τῶν δ' ἅμα, τῶν δὲ μέρος ἔχουσιν, ὥστε τὸ λοιπὸν μικρὸν ὁ ἐκινήθη μετ' ἐκείνο. (*Mem.* 451b10-21, trans. Sorabji, emphasis mine).³⁵

The changes or movements in recollection to which Aristotle is referring are *phantasmata*, and the order between these, he tells us, obtains either through necessity or by habit, and habitual associations are formed typically on the basis of relations such as similarity, opposition and proximity.³⁶ A few lines later, Aristotle reemphasises his point that the relations that obtain between things are reflected in our *phantasiai* of those things:

For the changes follow each other by habit, one after another. And thus whenever someone wishes to recollect, he will do the following. He will seek to get a starting point for a change after which will be the change in question. And this is why recollections occur quickest and best from a starting point. For as the things are related to each other in succession, so also are the changes. And whatever has some order, as things in mathematics do, is easily remembered.

³⁵ Importantly whilst this passage appears within the discussion of recollection, Aristotle also addresses the phenomenon of being reminded of something without seeking to recall it. This then shows that such associations can be brought to bear without having consciously to work to retrieve some piece of information; we can perceive an object and without conscious effort, we can be presented with the appropriate *phantasiai*.

³⁶ As Lorenz notes, Aristotle does not here address the question of how habituation and these patterns of association are interrelated. On the one hand, we might suppose that such patterns of association arise from habituation – we are, for example, used to hearing thunder after seeing lightning – but we might also think that where such relations obtain between suitable things, that this can facilitate or even bring about the formation of habits of association.

τῷ γὰρ ἔθει ἀκολουθοῦσιν αἱ κινήσεις ἀλλήλαις, ἥδε μετὰ τήνδε. καὶ ὅταν τοίνυν ἀναμνήσκουσι βούληται, τοῦτο ποιήσει· ζητήσει λαβεῖν ἀρχὴν κινήσεως, μεθ' ἣν ἐκείνη ἔσται. διὸ τάχιστα καὶ κάλλιστα γίνονται ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αἱ ἀναμνήσεις· ὡς γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ πράγματα πρὸς ἄλληλα τῷ ἐφεξῆς, οὕτω καὶ αἱ κινήσεις. καὶ ἔστιν εὐμνημόνευτα ὅσα τάξιν τινὰ ἔχει, ὡσπερ τὰ μαθήματα (*De Mem.* 451b28-52a2).³⁷

Putting this together with the passage before, Aristotle's claim appears to be that where things are similar, opposite or proximate to one another, these tend to be represented or called to mind either together or in immediate succession. And this claim, Lorenz concludes, together with Aristotle's discussion of sequences of orderly representations in *De Insomniis*, clearly shows that *phantasia* is such as to be able not only to represent things as complex as 'situations', but also to represent situations appropriate to whatever object is present to the animal.

Before I go on to propose my own development of this view, it will be important to note that on Lorenz' account, the envisaging of prospects is pleasant. He claims for example that the lion of *NE III 10* is pleased by the envisaged prospect of food (2009, p.131) although he does not explain in what way the envisaged prospect is pleasant: whether, that is, the eating that is the content of the prospect is something that is represented as pleasant, as per Whiting's account, or whether the envisaging is pleasant in some other way, as per Moss'. Certainly an account which maintains that *phantasia* is required for a subject to envisage suitable prospects is compatible with the thought that what is represented is also represented as pleasant; what is represented as pleasant is the envisaged situation. This will be important in the account I will now develop.

6.5 PHANTASIA AND PLEASANT AFFORDANCES

I want now to propose a development of the view presented above, intended specifically to apply to the case of virtuous action (although I believe the account will apply also to many cases of action outside the moral sphere). Lorenz, as we have seen, emphasises in his account the need for a subject to envisage prospective 'situations', but what I wish to draw attention to is the dynamic or practical nature of what must be envisaged, at least in the case of virtuous action (but also in a great many non-moral cases). For in cases of virtuous action, it is not simply the case that an agent performs a virtuous action with a view to securing some further end or with the hope that some further desirable situation will obtain; rather, the action is her end, and what she desires is to

³⁷ That whatever has order (ὅσα τάξιν τινὰ ἔχει) is easily remembered is particularly pertinent in light of the account of the fine in the previous chapter and its connection with order (*taxis*); fineness, in so far as it displays order, would seem to be something easily remembered.

perform the action. The virtuous action would seem to be the object of her desire. My proposal, then, is that in the case of virtuous action, an agent must be able to envisage not any old prospective ‘situation’, but specifically the actions or activities that are afforded by the objects in the environment or situations in which she finds herself;³⁸ actions or activities that, importantly, are envisaged as fine, and so attractive. And my suggestion is that this is made possible thanks to *phantasia*.

Insofar as I maintain that *phantasia* enables subjects to envisage prospects my account is similar to Lorenz’, and perhaps the kinds of practical prospects are amongst the ‘situations’ that Lorenz has in mind when he claims that *phantasia* enables a subject to envisage prospective situations.³⁹ But the practical nature of what must be envisaged in many circumstances is not at the fore of Lorenz’ discussion, and it is my particular emphasis on this and the application of the account to cases of moral action that distinguishes my view. Insofar as what is envisaged must be envisaged as pleasant, my account retains the insight discussed in §6.4.1 above, that *phantasia* plays an important role in the presentation of pleasure to a subject when this pleasure is not immediately present. Where my account is different is in specifying that what must be presented as pleasant is a prospective action or activity

I want to approach this proposal first by way of what I think is a misunderstanding of Lorenz’ account on the part of Moss. For in showing how one might mistakenly interpret Lorenz’ account, and likewise my own, I can better bring into view the picture I am proposing. Moss, in concluding her account remarks that:

phantasia can also supply the means to a given end – that is, can supply what corresponds to a ‘premise of the possible’. But this cannot be what makes *phantasia* necessary for action, for that role can be played by perception or thought as well. ...Much of what Lorenz attributes to practical *phantasia* makes sense of its instrumental role, and shows why in many cases perception will not suffice for this role while *phantasia* can fill the gap. Lorenz argues further, however, that *phantasia* is necessary for this role – that perception cannot guide animals in acting appropriately to achieve their goals. If he is right, we should conclude that Aristotle *should* have had a theory about how

³⁸ This use of the term ‘affordance’ finds its origins, within contemporary psychology, in Gibson (1979).

³⁹ Lorenz writes:

It should also be possible to have *phantasiai* (for instance) of being in some state or other, of *performing some action*, and of enjoying an experience. There is, then, good reason to accept that Aristotle conceives of *phantasia* so that it is cognitively powerful enough to enable a subject to apprehend what one might, speaking loosely, refer to as situations—*performing an action*, say, or enjoying an experience (2006, p.136, my emphasis).

Lorenz shows too that *phantasia* can represent both ‘types of actions’ (e.g. ‘stag-eating’), and particular prospective actions (say, ‘making a meal of the stag over there’).

animals figure out how to realise their goals, and moreover that had he had such a theory *phantasia* should have played a central role in it (2012, p.62).

Moss seems to take Lorenz to be stipulating that a subject must be able to envisage prospective situations on the grounds that this is required in order to guide her action, and that the role he attributes to *phantasia* is really to be understood as presenting the ‘premise of the possible’ – what it is that the subject must do in order to achieve her end. One might think that this is also how we should understand the role I am attributing to *phantasia*, in claiming that it presents to a subject certain action possibilities afforded by the situations in which she finds herself. But my claim is that these prospective situations or action possibilities do not simply guide the subject in achieving some further end; they are rather, if envisaged as pleasant, or in general as attractive, the end that is to be achieved. *Phantasia*, in presenting either prospective situations or my afforded actions, presents to the subject that which is her end, namely a pleasant situation or action.

We can get closer to this idea still by reflecting on an often unacknowledged oddity about those accounts discussed in §6.4.1 above, namely that they do not make clear just what it is that is represented as pleasant, or in Moss’ case, in a pleasurable way. Although the account I propose is intended to apply primarily to the case of virtuous action, it will be helpful to begin with the non-moral cases that these commentators discuss, before turning to the case of virtuous action.

It is commonplace in discussions of desire to talk of ‘objects’, when discussing what a desire is for, where an ‘object of desire’ might belong to one of a number of ontological categories. But many discussions of Aristotle’s conception of desire, and in particular those accounts which emphasise the importance of the presentation of pleasures to a subject, tend – perhaps unintentionally – to focus in their discussion on physical objects, and in a way which I will suggest amounts to a rather odd picture of desire and pursuit.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The focus on physical objects is revealed in Nussbaum’s discussion and in particular her reflection on the meaning of Aristotle’s use of the term ‘*orexis*’. This, she notes, has its root in the verb ‘*oregesthai*’ (‘to reach out for’, ‘to grasp at’), and Nussbaum argues that in choosing this word, Aristotle means to indicate that all forms of *orexis*, whether rational or non-rational, involve:

a reaching out for something in the world, *grasping after some object* in order to take it to oneself. Both human and other animals... have in common that they stretch forward, so to speak, *towards pieces of the world* which they then attain or appropriate (2001, p.275-6, *my emphasis*).

Now, Nussbaum is right to claim that Aristotle’s use of *orexis* strongly implies a directedness towards an object, but her characterisation of *orexis* as a reaching out for ‘a piece’ of the world might lead to an overly narrow focus on physical objects as objects of desire. Pearson criticises the narrowness of Nussbaum’s picture, writing that her:

characterisation of *orexis* as a reaching out for something in, or a piece of, the world so that one can take, attain, or appropriate it for oneself, is actually rather more restrictive than it should be. This characterisation will fit cases in which the creature is motivated to eat some food it encounters, for example, or grab hold of something valuable, such as money (cf. *NE* 7.4.1148a25), but *orexis* can extend

Take, for example, Modrak’s discussion of “the association of gustatory pleasures with an object presented through other sense modalities” (1987, p.97), in which the example of such an object was a berry, given to perception, which when associated with gustatory pleasure is rendered an object of desire. Here ‘the berry’ is assumed to be the object of desire. But whilst it may be commonplace to talk of physical objects as pleasant and as objects of desire, there is in fact something a little odd in saying that a berry, for example, is what is ‘to be pursued’. For what, we might ask, is it to ‘pursue’ a berry? What we surely find pleasant in the berry case, is tasting or eating the berry; what it is to ‘pursue’ the berry, is just to eat it. But here the eating is surely not some ‘means’ to the berry; rather, eating-the-berry is just what the creature desires to do. Of course, in some cases this may also be a means to a further end – relieving hunger, say – but either way, the creature’s goal is not ‘the berry’ as such. It is rather a particular berry-involving activity.⁴¹

The problem with those accounts, then, that attributed to *phantasia* a role *only* in the representation of objects as pleasant (or presentation to the subject of pleasures) – where the objects in question are physical objects – is that it is not clear how simply to represent a physical object as pleasant is in itself sufficient for that creature to have before them some suitable goal. This is not to say that a further *step* is needed beyond, say, the representation of an object as pleasant for it to be desired, rather it is to say that to talk of either perceived or imagined *physical objects* as those which are represented as pleasant, is to mistake what must be represented as pleasant. For it is, I submit, the eating of the berry (or the resulting lack of hunger) that is pleasant, and what is desired.⁴² Indeed, as Aristotle writes in *De Motu* 7, we are ‘beings who desire to act’ (τῶν δ’ ὀρεγομένων πράττειν) (701b1).

more widely than such contexts. In addition to being for pieces of, or things in, the world in this way, *orexeis* can also, more simply, be for *processes*; whether bodily, as with sex or eating, or for mental activities, as with the pleasure of learning (e.g. *NE* 3.1. 1111a31). *Orexeis* can also be for *states* or *conditions*, such as health (*NE* 3.1.1111a31, *NE* 3.3. 1111b27–28) or honour (*NE* 7.4. 1148a26); for *events*, such as victory (*NE* 7.4.1148a26); and for *states of affairs*, e.g. that one’s wine does not go off (*NE* 8.2.1155b29–31), or ‘to rule all mankind’ (*EE* 2.10.1225b33–34). (2012, p.20).

Pearson is right to point to the variety of phenomena that can count as *orekta*, but he is does not go far enough in criticising Nussbaum’s view. For as I will argue below, it is somewhat misleading to say that our desires can be for ‘pieces of or things in the world’, at least without some qualification.

⁴¹ Or take again the case of some cool water, that is represented as pleasant. To a thirsty creature, the water is pleasant to drink; to a hot creature, it is pleasant to bathe in. It is not pleasant, or an object of desire, *itself*, but only in connection with a particular activity.

⁴² Aristotle repeatedly points to the connection between pleasure and actions and activities. See esp. *NE* 1104b4–5; 14–15. (This is not, however, to say that pleasure could not also be taken in the obtaining of states of affairs, or in things like ‘being honoured’, and so forth).

My suggestion, then, is as follows. When we perceive a physical object, thanks to *phantasia* we can also ‘see’ – in a broad sense of the term⁴³ – that object as affording certain actions or activities, which we might apprehend as either pleasant or painful. When we are presented with the object or situation that affords these activities, unless we are currently engaged in the relevant activity, the activity will be not present to perception. But thanks to my previous perceptions of performing such actions or engaging in such activities in connection with the object or situation in question, and thanks to *phantasia* and its ability to preserve such perceptual content and represent it at a later stage, I am able to envisage these action possibilities, afforded by the object or situation. Depending on whether my previous perceptions of the actions or activities were of their being pleasant or painful, I see these afforded actions as such, and thus as to be pursued or avoided. Because I have had many pleasant experiences of drinking red wine, I see the glass of red wine as affording the pleasant activity of drinking; because I have played card games, but not enjoyed them, I see a pack of cards as affording such games, though I see these as unpleasant and objects of avoidance.⁴⁴

It must be admitted right away that this is a speculative account of what is involved in the presentation of suitable objects of desire and the prompting of action. But support for this view can be gleaned, I submit, from a number of passages, one of which we have already examined, namely Aristotle’s discussion of the hound or lion’s pleasure taken in the prospect of eating hares or stags. This I submit, provides support for the thought that our ‘view’, as it were, of objects or situations is in part constituted by the actions or activities they afford: in sighting a deer, a lion is able to apprehend that he will have a meal (ὅτι βορὰν ἔξει), or as we might also put it, the prospect of *eating*. Strong evidence too can be found in Aristotle’s example of desiring to drink in *De Motu* 7, in which he writes: “I must drink”, says appetite. “This is drink”, says *aisthēsis*, *phantasia* or *nous*; at once he drinks (ποτέον μοι, ἢ ἐπιθυμία λέγει· τοδὶ δὲ ποτόν, ἢ αἴσθησις εἶπεν ἢ ἡ φαντασία ἢ ὁ νοῦς· εὐθὺς πίνει)” (701a32-3). Frequently the ‘τοδὶ δὲ ποτόν’ is translated as ‘this is drink’, but note

⁴³ Where this involves both perception and *phantasia*. Frede makes an insightful remark in her paper, to the effect that “because *phantasiai* can be separated from their origin, this means they can give us *a coherent picture of a situation that transcends the immediate perception*” (p. 285, my emphasis). Frede’s paper is more generally associated with the Interpretive View of *phantasia*, but this remark is nevertheless interesting in light of the view I put forward.

⁴⁴ Conversely, my brother sees a glass of wine as affording an unenjoyable activity of drinking, and a pack of cards the pleasant or enjoyable activity of card games.

that the ‘ποτόν’ may also be translated as ‘drinkable’, suggesting that what is before the agent affords the activity of drinking.⁴⁵

So whilst there may be a great many cases in which a subject apprehends a state of affairs as pleasant and so desires to bring this about, I am suggesting that there are a great many cases too in which what is apprehended as pleasant and so desirable is an action or activity that is afforded by a particular object or situation, and that *phantasia* enables us to apprehend this action. It is this particular picture of desire and action that is most relevant to the context of virtuous action, where an agent must desire to engage in some action. My proposal is that a virtuous agent, when confronted with particular objects or situations, sees these as affording particular actions or activities – that is, virtuous actions, or activities – which having been perceived in the course of her habituation to be fine, she perceives to be attractive, and so to be pursued. These attractive affordances are presented through *phantasia*, and provide an agent with suitable goals in the situations in which she finds herself. They arise, however, thanks to her previous perceptions of performing such actions (in relevantly similar circumstances) and her perception of their fine and pleasant nature.

Before we put the findings of this chapter together with those of the previous, and look further at the developmental account, I want first to respond to one more potential criticism of the above account; a criticism that is levelled by Moss against Lorenz, and which owing at least to similarities between our accounts, might be seen to apply to mine as well.

6.5.1 MOSS’ CRITICISM: ADDING CONTENT

In motivating her own account of the contribution of *phantasia* to the production of desire, which identifies this contribution with the presentation of pleasurable affect, Moss makes a general criticism of a number of the foregoing accounts, which, she writes:

⁴⁵ One might want to insist that ποτόν should simply be read as the noun ‘drink’, rather than the adjective ‘drinkable’, but even if this is so, it is telling that in this example Aristotle has chosen a noun associated with the verb ‘to drink’, rather than choosing an alternative such as ‘water’ or ‘liquid’, as he does elsewhere (e.g. *De Insomn.* 461a14).

If ποτόν is to be taken as ‘drinkable’, however, does the passage not then suggest that the afforded activity of drinking is then something that can be perceived when one is presented with an object, since this is ‘said’ by perception, *phantasia* or thought? I believe, however, that this passage can be made consistent with my account if we accept, as I believe Aristotle would, that perception *can* apprehend “this is drinkable” (or “this is something that is being drunk”) when the subject is drinking. In the majority of cases, however, the action will not be presently performed, and so *phantasia* is required to present the pleasurable affordance of drinking.

hold that *phantasia* contributes to locomotion by *adding some content* to what we get from perception, and yet this is precisely what Aristotle's own account seems to deny' (2012, pp.56-7, my emphasis).

In Nussbaum's case the 'added content' is the apprehension of an object *as an object*, in Modrak's it is the apprehension of the object *as sweet and pleasant*, and on Lorenz', Moss presumably takes the added content to be the envisaged 'situation'.

In support of the thought that Aristotle's own account denies that *phantasia* motivates by 'adding some content' to what we get from perception, Moss appeals to one of Aristotle's concluding remarks towards the end of *DA* III 3, where he writes that "*because phantasiai* remain and are similar to perceptions (*διὰ τὸ ἐμμένειν καὶ ὁμοίως εἶναι*), animals do many things in accordance with them" (429a4-6). Moss argues that:

Aristotle's claim here is that *phantasia* contributes to animal action just by preserving and reproducing perceptions – not by interpreting them, or synthesizing them, or in other ways going beyond what perception on its own could do were it being actually exercised on the appropriate object at the moment (2012, p.56).

It is because *phantasiai* are similar to perceptions that animals are motivated by them; thus, she implies, we cannot suppose that *phantasia* motivates by adding some content to perception, for if it did, it would not be 'because' *phantasiai* remain and are similar to perceptions that they motivate. In proposing that *phantasia* contributes to locomotion by presenting prospective situations, Moss suggests that Lorenz' account appears also to maintain that the contribution of *phantasia* consists in adding content to perception and so, she claims, ought to be resisted; I take it that she would level the same criticism at the account I have developed above.

And yet as I have attempted to show, without appeal to certain content – content which given the absence of the relevant perceptible is *currently* unavailable to perception, but which can be represented through *phantasia* thanks to its ability to represent things that are not currently being perceived – it is difficult to account for a subject's apprehension of suitable goals, when she is not currently engaged in the relevant activity. How, if at all, can we reconcile the above with Moss' claim that *phantasia* cannot motivate by 'adding content to perception'?

The solution, I believe, is to distinguish between two senses of 'adding content to perception', only one of which, I submit, is in potential conflict with Aristotle's remarks at 429a4-6. There is one sense of 'adding content to perception' where the content that is added is content that perception is itself *incapable* of presenting; content that is thus strictly non-perceptual. So on Nussbaum's view, the additional non-perceptual content would be the presentation of an object

as an object of a certain sorts, which she takes to be content that is never available to perception but which can be provided by *phantasia*. We have of course already seen that Nussbaum is mistaken in thinking that perception cannot present objects as objects, but I take it that Moss' argument is that even if Nussbaum were correct, this view would conflict with the claim that because *phantasiai* are like the perceptions they preserve, animals are motivated by them.

But there is another sense of 'adding content to perception', where the content 'added' is not content that could never be available to perception, or is in some way non-perceptual. Rather, the 'added' content is perceptual content that is not *currently* supplied by perception. On the view I am defending, both perception and *phantasia* have the same intentional objects and share the same content. Indeed, we saw on the causal account that the content of *phantasia* is derived originally from perception, and under different conditions (when a given object is directly present to the relevant sensory modality, say), such content could be supplied by perception. The sense in which *phantasia* 'adds content' to perception on this view is different from the one above, for it does not suppose that such content is different in kind from perceptual content. The point, rather, is that where that content cannot on a given occasion be supplied by perception, it can instead be supplied by *phantasia*.

It is worth emphasising that actions and activities are things which, for Aristotle, can be perceived, and are thus amongst the perceptual content that can be preserved and represented through *phantasia*. In *NE IX 9*, for example, Aristotle uses as an example someone who in seeing also "perceives that he sees, and one who hears that he hears, and who *walks that he walks* (ὁ δ' ὁρῶν ὅτι ὁρᾷ αἰσθάνεται καὶ ὁ ἀκούων ὅτι ἀκούει καὶ ὁ βαδίζων ὅτι βαδίζει)" and continues "in the case of other activities there is something that perceives that one is engaged in them (καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως ἔστι τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν)" (1170a31-32).⁴⁶ And in *De Memoria* we are provided with the example of an action that is remembered, and so presented through *phantasia*: one remembers for example that one "did something or other the day before yesterday (οἷον ὅτι τρίτην ἡμέραν ὀδήποτε ἐποίησεν) (453a1).⁴⁷ Actions and activities are perceptible.

Now, if we can perceive actions and activities, and such content can be preserved and represented by *phantasia* when the relevant actions or activities are not currently being perceived, this is perfectly consistent with the idea that 'because *phantasiai* remain and are similar to

⁴⁶ As we saw in Chapter 4 (§4.6.1) he also speaks of observing a friend's actions, which are easier to observe than one's own. Here the verb is θεωρεῖν (1169b33) but we might suppose that in such cases Aristotle believes that a virtuous agent will perceive her friend's actions.

⁴⁷ Sorabji discusses the recollection of actions in his (1972, p.98).

perceptions, animals do many things in accordance with them’, since what *phantasia* preserves and represents is the content of previous perceptions. And thus if either my account or that of Lorenz are taken to suggest that *phantasia* contributes to the formation of desires by ‘adding content’ to perception, it is only in this second sense. For what are re-presented by *phantasia* are previous perceptions of situations or activities, when those situations or activities do not currently obtain. And these, when apprehended as pleasant, provide the subject with goals to pursue.⁴⁸

Interestingly indeed, whilst Moss does not make clear what kinds of objects are to be represented as pleasant, or represented in a pleasurable way, some of her remarks suggest that she may implicitly assume a picture not so dissimilar to my own. Moss, recall, contrasts a case in which “an animal is in perceptual contact with something pleasing – *actually tasting water*, for example” (2012, p.62, my emphasis), where she feels pleasure and hence desire to keep going, with a case in which she is not engaged in drinking the water, but in which “in *remembering or anticipating or imagining the pleasant taste of water*, the animal is having a pleasurable *phantasia* of it” (2012, p.62, my emphasis), and so desires to pursue this. Notice that the content of the *phantasia* appears to be the activity of tasting the water, which on Moss’ account is experienced as pleasant; and insofar as the content of the *phantasia* is an activity, which is either experienced as or represented as pleasant, Moss appears implicitly to assume a picture not unlike like my own.

6.6 HOW ACTING CHANGES OUR PERCEPTIONS AND DESIRES

In the final part of this chapter I want to focus on the case of virtuous action to continue the task began in the previous section, of connecting this picture with the picture developed in the previous chapter, and to tell a story of the transformation of an agent’s perceptions and desires through the practice of virtuous actions.

In the previous chapter, I offered an account of part of what happens when an agent practises virtuous actions. Such actions, I argued, are fine and through their performance an agent perceives this quality. I argued too that to perceive something to be fine, is at the same time to find that

⁴⁸ One might perhaps wonder whether the suggestion made earlier, that *phantasiai* in desires that motivate action are motivating because what is presented is presented in the mode of the future and the possible, might conflict with the claim at *DA* 429a4-6, since something’s being future and possible is not perceptual content. One might suppose then that part of what does the motivating is then some non-perceptual content. But I suggest that we do not need to see the ‘future’ or ‘possible’ qualities of afforded actions as part of the content of what is presented through *phantasia*; these are rather the modes of presentation of the perceptual content presented through *phantasia*. As I suggested above, envisaging can be regarded as the mode of presenting something as future and possible, but these qualities do not need to enter as the content of what is presented.

thing pleasant - indeed, pleasant in a quite particular way (1175b24-29). The pleasure a subject takes in something she has discriminated as fine registers the value that she perceives, and so to perceive something as fine is to find it attractive, and desirable. Thus by practising virtuous actions an agent comes to perceive their fineness and to desire to perform such actions. This pleasure and desire are importantly connected with the quality of such actions that makes them choiceworthy for their own sake.

In putting this together with our examination of *phantasia* and its relation to perception in this chapter, we can already see how having come to perceive the value of virtuous action, to see it as attractive and taking pleasure in its performance, thanks to *phantasia* these value perceptions will be preserved and can be represented at a later stage. But in light of the discussion in the second half of this chapter, we can see now that that is not all that happens. For in practising virtuous actions, and through attending to the objects or situations in connection with which these actions were performed, the agent comes to see such objects and situations as *affording* these virtuous actions in the future, affordances which are apprehended as attractive and to be pursued.⁴⁹

The picture I have been developing, in both the moral and non-moral case, is one in which our 'view' of objects and situations, as it were, is shaped by the way in which we act – indeed how we habitually act. Through acting we discover the actions that objects or situations afford, and come then to see such objects and situations as *affording* those actions in the future; these actions become part of our 'view' of those objects. We come to see the world, as it were, in terms of the actions and activities that it affords, and this is something that comes about through acting.

I gave the example earlier of a glass of wine *affording* drinking, and it might strike us as obvious that this is part of our 'view' of a glass of wine; but note how for a small infant the activity of drinking does not form part of their view of the wine. It affords smearing or splashing perhaps. Or take the infant with a crayon in hand who discovers that white walls afford the opportunity for drawing, whilst for an adult who has learned not to draw on walls, they do not afford this activity. Indeed, our view of the actions afforded by objects or situations can become increasingly sophisticated and fine grained (both wine and water afford drinking, but only the latter affords gulping, whilst the former affords pleasant sipping; the bottle of wine is also seen as *affording* the

⁴⁹ Given the close connection with the picture I am offering and that developed by Lorenz, I submit that much the same textual support (presented throughout this chapter) can be appealed to, in order to show how things as actions can be both perceived and preserved and represented through *phantasia*, and how these can be presented in connection with the appropriate objects or situations.

pleasant activity of drinking in the evening, say, and not early in the morning, and so on). The more experience one has, the more one brings to bear when confronted by future situations.

The previous chapter sought to offer some explanation as to what happens when an agent practises virtuous actions, and how it is that in so acting her desires and other states are transformed, as Aristotle indicates that they are. There, we saw that the performance of virtuous actions is necessary in order to perceive their value, and that in perceiving this value such actions become desirable. Here we see a further importance in performing virtuous actions, for in performing these actions we discover, and are able to see in the future, the attractive action possibilities that various objects and situations afford. By repeatedly performing virtuous actions we transform our view of objects and situations, and at the same time transform our desires, and emotions too.

In petting a once scary-seeming dog, say, in learning not to back away from him, that he is gentle and likes to be petted, and so on, the young learner comes to see the dog not as an object of fear, from which she runs away, but as something approachable, that will not harm her, and with which she can interact. This is an early stage in the development of courage, and as the learner imitates a virtuous character model and is guided in her action, learning to stand firm in more and more (appropriate) situations, (whilst treating with care dangerous things), she comes to see like objects and situations as ones with respect to which to stand firm in the future. Moreover, in having discovered the fine quality of such action, she will see such affordances as attractive and worth going for too.

Or take again, a young learner who learns to share her toys with her younger brother. In doing this, she comes to see her toys as things to be shared (rather than to be secreted away), and like situations in the future as affording the activity of sharing, which she has perceived to be fine and attractive. These affordances, and this particular pleasure of fine action, are indeed things that a child who has never shared will not apprehend in like circumstances: she will simply see the toys as things to keep to herself, and the notion of parting with them as unattractive. Again, as the learner is guided by and imitates the virtuous agent in more situations, extending sharing to food or to money, she again sees more and more varied situations as affording the opportunity for fine action, and in continuing to act in this way, she begins to develop the virtuous of generosity.

I want to end by drawing our attention to two important features of this account. First, note the importance on this view of how an agent *herself* acts with respect to a particular object or situation in terms of constituting her view of such objects and situations, and the desires she has.

An agent might, for example, see that other people do not run away from spiders, and indeed believe that spiders ought not to be fled from, but if she still flees from spiders herself, spiders will still appear to her as something from which *she* runs away. If this picture of *phantasia*, and the role that our own actions play in the constitution of our view of things is correct, it offers a fuller explanation – in conjunction with the argument of Chapter 5 – of Aristotle’s insistence that “without performing [just and temperate] actions, no one has the remotest chance of becoming good” (1105b11-12). We need to perform virtuous actions ourselves, not only to perceive their value and so for them to become possible objects of desire, but also in order to see situations as affording such action possibilities; for us to be presented, that is, with such desirable goals as we navigate the world.

Second, note how closely connected, on this account, are the agent’s perceptions, pleasures, grasp of value, desires, emotions, knowledge of what to do in situations, and so on. And note further how it is that through (imitative and guided) action all of these can be developed. On this picture, these various capacities, these forms of knowledge, and so forth, are not developed independently of each other, or in a sequence of discrete stages, but rather together and simultaneously, over time. By acting, and doing so in an attentive way, we come to perceive certain values, we discover particular pleasures, our view of the world becomes enlarged, our knowledge of how to act is developed, our desires are transformed – and all of these things are achieved together. On this account, then, the student of virtue does not acquire knowledge of what to do, then learn to choose such actions for their own sake, and then have this become something stable. The agent’s knowledge, choice and stable character are all interconnected and emerge through the simultaneous development of various capacities, effected by her practice of virtuous actions.

CONCLUSION

Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* offers an attractive picture of human flourishing, on which our flourishing importantly depends on our activity as moral beings and so is achievable through our own agency. His account of how we come to realise this activity equally stresses the importance of our own agency and activity in effecting our development; the way in which we act, he argues, determines how we develop. This thesis has been an attempt to understand this developmental process, and just how it is that through performing virtuous actions we develop as virtuous agents and come to realise the virtuous activity on which flourishing depends.

I have argued for a picture of the learner's habituation that takes seriously the thought that a learner, whilst performing virtuous actions, does not yet act virtuously, but that through the practice of such actions she comes over time to meet the conditions of virtuously performed action, and thus to realise mature virtuous activity. I have argued that we should conceive of the learner as engaged in the imitation of a virtuous character model, and that in taking seriously the imitative nature of her activity we are offered a way of explaining how her practice of alienable actions can result in the strict authorship of such actions that characterises the virtuous agent. The imitative model allows us to see the learner's action as not radically discontinuous with that of the virtuous agent, whilst maintaining an important distinction between the two forms of action, and indeed respecting the priority that Aristotle accords to the activity of the virtuous agent.

By imitating a virtuous character model, I argued that a learner will attend closely to the nature of her model's action and the situations to which this is a response, and in so doing will begin to acquire both knowledge of virtuous actions and to develop the various discriminatory skills that are required for mature virtuous activity. More importantly, however, in imitating the virtuous *agent* and not just her actions, the learner will be required to adopt the perspective of the virtuous agent and to see situations in the way that the virtuous agent does. I argued that in doing this the learner is thus enabled to perceive the value of virtuous action which makes it worth choosing for its own sake. This value is its 'fineness', which I argued the learner perceives in the course of performing virtuous actions. The fine is an objective property of virtuous actions, there to be discovered and which, when perceived, an agent will also find attractive; the value that the

agent perceives is registered in a distinctive pleasure she takes in such action. In perceiving the fineness of virtuous actions, the learner will find these attractive and see them as worth going for. Thus we see the origins of the virtuous agent's disposition to choose virtuous actions for their own sake, and how this is developed precisely through the performance of such actions, as Aristotle informs us is the case. To perceive the fineness of virtuous actions, however, requires more than that a learner merely performs these; she needs also to attend to the nature of the action and the morally important features of the situation to which it is a fitting response. And this, I argued, is precisely what is afforded by her imitation of a virtuous agent.

In the final chapter I developed this picture further and explained, by appeal to Aristotle's capacity of *phantasia* and its role in desire and motivating action, how it is that our view of objects or situations is shaped by the way in which we act. By acting in certain ways and perceiving these ways of acting as attractive, thanks to the operation of *phantasia* an agent comes to see situations as affording certain (virtuous) actions or activities, apprehended as fine and so attractive. Thus she desires to act in these ways in the situations in which she finds herself.

The picture I present, then, is one on which the learner's perceptions, imagination, memories, expectations, pleasures, desires, and no doubt also beliefs, are shaped by the way in which she has acted. These capacities and their development, indeed, can be seen as intimately and dynamically related. An agent's perceptions, pleasures and *phantasiai* 'prepare', as Aristotle puts it, her desires, and motivate her action; but equally we saw that a learner's motivational states, in so far as they will influence what it is she attends to when engaging in a certain course of action, will thus influence what she is able to perceive and the pleasures that are thereby available to her. Having come to appreciate the way in which these various capacities are dynamically related and how through their joint development these together result in the realisation of virtuous agency and activity, we should be in a position to see two things.

The first is that the development of the learner's knowledge of virtuous action and her motivation – and, indeed, her stable state – are not effected through distinct processes in the way that some imagine. On certain views of the learner's habituation, it is supposed either that the learner will first need knowledge of virtuous action, and then to develop her motivational states (and subsequently to achieve stability), or that these will be developed through distinct processes. But on my view, the learner's knowledge of virtuous action which is developed through, and in part constituted by, her trained perception of virtuous actions and situations (where what the agent perceives and comes to know is not just what virtuous action consists in on a given occasion,

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but also of its value, that is, its fineness) is not developed through a distinct process, nor can it be divorced from the agent's motivation to perform those actions for their own sake. In coming to appreciate the nature of virtuous actions and their fineness, the learner at the same time comes to find these attractive and to be motivated to perform these actions for their own sake.

The second thing we are now in a position to appreciate, is that it is less than clear that the development of capacities that are classified respectively as non-rational and rational, can only be influenced by correspondingly non-rational or rational modes of learning. We saw at the outset how many traditional accounts assume that only non-rational processes can affect non-rational capacities – that advice or explanations could not influence a subject's desires, perceptions, and so forth, whilst rational capacities can be developed only through rational or intellectual means.

On the picture I have presented, through the practice of virtuous actions a learner will at the same time develop beliefs about such action, and indeed, we might suppose that in this way the learner may begin to develop her practical rationality. But we have also seen how the promptings and explanations of a guide, and her own reflections, can not only produce beliefs in the learner, but direct her attention and in this way influence the development of her perceptions, pleasures and desires. Promptings and reflection, then, would seem to be able to contribute to the development of capacities that belong to the non-rational part of the soul, whilst through acting and perceiving, it would seem too that we can develop beliefs, belonging to the rational part of the soul. The assumption of a strict isomorphism between the nature of capacities and the means by which they can be developed would seem in this way to be undermined.

I want to end by reflecting on one last feature of the account I have proposed. I began this thesis by noting the attractiveness of Aristotle's picture of flourishing and our development as moral agents, which I attributed in part to its emphasis on our own activity and agency in determining how well our lives go. Barring the role of misfortune and certain external goods, our flourishing and moral development are not things that happen to us, but which we effect through our own action. Both, indeed, must be enacted. But in emphasising the importance of one's own agency and activity, we should not lose sight of the fact that, as I have presented it, the activity of moral development is also a social activity. The learner requires the presence of mature virtuous agents on whom to model herself and her action, and to guide her actions and her attention. It is precisely thanks to the guidance of others and her inhabiting of *another's* perspective that the learner comes to discover the true nature of virtuous action and the value that resides in this. The learner is certainly not passive in her development, but nor, importantly, is she alone.

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